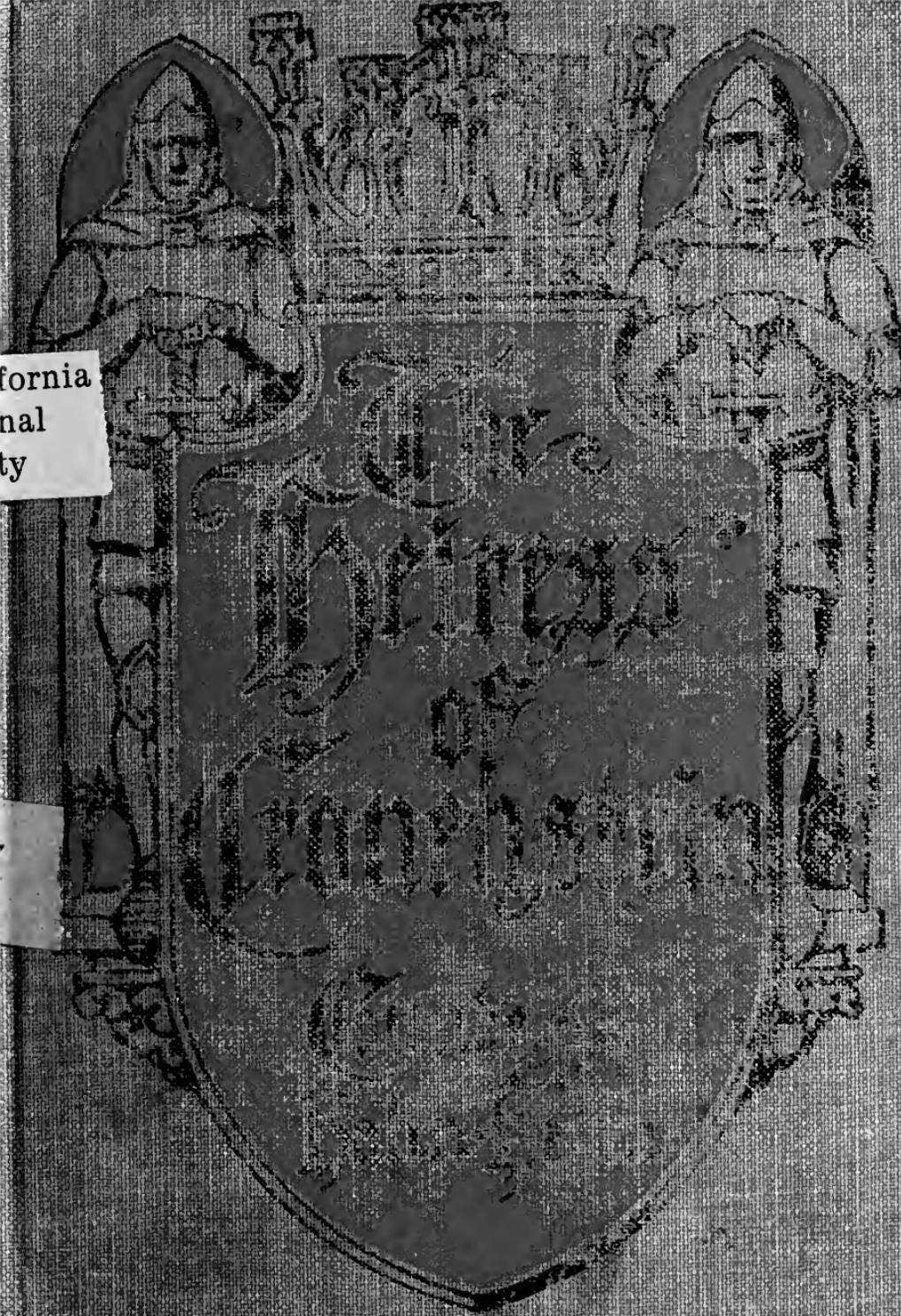


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THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN.



THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN

BY THE

COUNTESS HAHN-HAHN

Hahn-Hahn, Ida Marie Luise
Sophie Friederike Gustava,
ADAPTED FROM THE GERMAN BY
MARY H. ALLIES

gräfin

*O amare, O ire, O sibi perire,
O ad Deum pervenire.*

ST. AUGUSTINE.

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THE HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN.

CHAPTER I.

CASTLE AND TOWN.

THE districts watered by the large and small rivers in the neighborhood of the Rhine are amongst the pleasantest in Germany. Along the banks of the Moselle, Lahn, Neckar, Murg, and Kinzig, to mention a few out of many, the eye rests upon a varied succession of sylvan and romantic pictures at every turn. It is not the stupendous beauty of a lofty mountain nor the majesty of a lordly river; it neither dazzles nor overawes. It is a beauty full of sentiment, hence eminently German.

The ancient little town of X., numbering about five thousand inhabitants, was situated on one of these Rhine rivers. An old ivy-grown church of Roman origin formed the centre of its irregular streets. The vine flourished on the sunny hills with their southwest aspect, though not to the same extent as on the Moselle and in the Rheingau. The grape ripened in the narrow slips of valley, and the lordly forest crowned the hilltops. A few wood-dealers, whose trade had descended from father to son, had grown well-to-do in the course of time, and

employed wood-cutters and wood-carriers. Houses run up by contract were unknown at X., whilst there were not a few projecting gabled roofs, black with age, in simple and serious contrast to smiling nature all around.

The highroad branching off at the entrance of the town led up to Cronenstein Castle, a modern residence on an ancient site. A powerful arched entrance alone remained of the old building, and over it the arms of the Cronensteins were conspicuous : a crown strongly cut in stone, and on each side in a niche half hidden by ivy, a knight in armor. The site was magnificent, commanding as it did the upward and downward traffic on the river, the highroad, the town, and the opposite bank. The chapel was evidently new, built in ornate Gothic, with very narrow arched windows and the mysterious rose over the portal. To the right a cluster of old lime-trees sheltered a rocky terrace, which presented a lively scene in the spring of 185-. Four boys and a girl were playing at soap-bubbles. Their youthful spirits proved too boisterous for the game, so they were delighted when the girl's pipe at last produced a full round bubble.

“ That one will soar up with the birds ! ”

“ Yes, to the angels.”

“ No, to God ! ”

“ O dear ! there, it has melted away.”

“ Neither you nor I can reach God by this road,” exclaimed the girl, as merry as her little companions.

“ And soap-bubbles are not good enough for heaven,” said one of the children.

"Why not, Rees?" she asked.

"Because they dissolve," answered the child.

"That's quite right, Rees. Everything is beautiful in heaven, because everything lasts forever."

These children were spending the afternoon with Florestine von Cronenstein, as a reward for good conduct. They came from St. Francis' Mount, a Franciscan convent at the other end of the town, and their little hearts had been gladdened by strawberries and soap-bubbles, Florestine being the gladdest of them all. She was now eighteen, her father's only child, and had lost her mother when she was ten. Frau von Cronenstein had had a sister whose marriage had been as unhappy as her own had been fortunate. After her husband's death Frau von Strahl had been invited to live at the Castle in order that she might give her niece a mother's care. She had previously occupied the top of a house in X., belonging to Herzog, the wood-dealer. His children, in visiting their grandmother at the same house, had seen those of the *Frau Majorin*, as she was called. Telesphor Herzog was Franz von Strahl's comrade both at home and at school, and Franz was not sure whether he liked Florestine or Telesphor best. When Franz went to live at the Castle, Telesphor went with him to a certain extent. At least he was a daily guest there, and Herr von Cronenstein was fond of him.

* * * * *

After seeing the children home, Florestine and her father were returning over the hill, for, as Florestine said to him, "the world looks better when you look down on it."

"There you are right, Flore. Mind you always do it."

Florestine seemed to wait an explanation of these words, but none came. She followed her father up the hill. It was nearly sunset when they reached the top. Rosy clouds lit up the evening sky, but the twilight already hung over the valley, and here and there a light appeared in the windows of the town. Deep silence reigned over all nature. Not a leaf moved on the trees, the birds had long sought out their nests, the midges, dancing so merrily in the evening sunlight, they too had disappeared. From time to time the sound of a dog barking or of a cow lowing was heard in the villages on the opposite side of the river.

Passing through a thicket, they were now standing on an open spot overlooking the Cronenstein hill. The Castle and the chapel lay at their feet, and the few windows from which lights shone gleamed like stars through the sombre foliage of the trees.

"Oh, really, our chapel is too pretty!" exclaimed Florestine. "Don't these arched windows, with their mullioned rose lighted from within, look like a heavenly constellation?"

"The fact that it *is* lighted warns us that we are late," said Herr von Cronenstein. "Make haste down."

The house of Herzog, the wood-dealer, was situated in the principal street of X., and a very unpretending tradesman's house it was, mainly contrived for blocks of wood which were stacked in the large courtyard. Old Herzog had lost his eldest

son. Telesphor, the youngest of the family, was a general favorite, a handsome, very gifted boy. The four Duke's daughters (*Herzogstöchter*), as they were jokingly called in the town, were very pretty girls. Agatha was married to the postmaster, and Apollonia to young Dr. Hellmut, who was gradually falling into his father's practice of the whole town.

Afra was engaged to one of the college masters, also a native of X. The youngest daughter, Frances, was alone out of harmony with her surroundings. Her sisters were characterized by their simple dispositions, love of family life, hearty industry, and their obedient spirit. She did not even wish to be so distinguished. She coveted showy advantages, talents, culture, and the elegancies of life.

When Telesphor was fifteen, being, as he was, intelligent beyond his years, his father thought it high time that he should give up Latin and Greek and devote himself to bookkeeping and business, for it was his cherished wish that Telesphor should succeed him in the wood-dealing. Great, therefore, was his surprise to hear that Telesphor had made up his mind to study for the priesthood. "A general disturbance of the heavenly bodies," as he expressed it, "would have astonished him less." The old man fetched his Sunday clothes on the spot and went straight up to the Castle to unburden his heart.

"What extra grand piece of news are you bringing me, Herzog? Good, eh?" was Herr von Cronenstein's greeting.

"My Teles wants to be a priest! What do you

say to that, sir?" said Herzog, without further preamble. " You know the boy as well as I. Tell me what I ought to do."

" You are passive. It is your son who has to do."

" Yes, so it is . . . but my business, my business!" said Herzog, pressing his forehead anxiously. " You don't know how I cling to my business and my firm. Look, I can't say exactly how old I am; it's in the register at the church—but I have been a good fifty years in business, *that* I know as well as the Our Father. Am I to see it all fall to the ground, or pass into other hands? My poor Fidelis is gone! If he were alive, he would have been married and a father by now, and the business would be secure. Fidelis Herzog. Why, the name would have descended from father to son! Or if, at least, one of my daughters had married a man who would have been willing to go into the business— But, no! They understand as much about wood-dealing as a crow does about Sunday. All my hopes were centred in Teles, the clever, promising lad, and now he is crushing them. And yet I may not be angry with him if he has a real vocation to the priesthood. But time must elapse before we can be sure, and God almighty may take me before I am able to find a partner."

So he poured out his troubles. Herr von Cronenstein listened sympathetically, and then replied kindly:

" I am just about in the same position as you, Herzog. My name, too, will die with me, as my daughter will take her future husband's—and what

will become of this property on which we have spent ourselves? I think God allows it to prevent our clinging to earthly things. He promised eternal life to our souls, not to our family name. Don't you vex yourself. Perhaps your son may still take up your business, or your fourth son-in-law. But you must have patience for a few years."

"A few years!" echoed Herzog, quite startled.
"I have given the boy a few weeks to think about it."

"Teles will hardly change his mind in four weeks, but he might in four years," said Herr von Cronenstein. "A boy does not know the world or what it has to offer—a young man looks at it with very different eyes. Leave him quietly at college, and if at the end of his last term he chooses the priesthood, you will have to thank God for it."

"What patience I shall require to live through those three years!"

"Four years," laughed Herr von Cronenstein, correcting him. "Four full years and four weeks, as we are four weeks off the holidays."

When it was rumored that Teles thought of the priesthood and therefore remained at his books, every one expressed satisfaction.

Frances Herzog alone was cold on the subject and without enthusiasm. She did not express her feelings to her father and mother, but gave her full confidence to Afra. Needlework always upset her, and on this lovely summer afternoon she was condemned to sit hemming and marking pocket-handkerchiefs for Afra's *trousseau*. She was shedding tears over her sad fortune, whilst Afra sang "*Da gang i an's*

Briūnneli,” in a loud voice, and the canary lustily responded to her song. Suddenly Frances sprang up, and putting both hands to her ears, exclaimed, “It’s intolerable, Afra!”

“What is?” asked Afra in surprise.

“The noise which you and your tiresome bird are making!”

“Do you call it a noise?” asked Afra laughing. “I and my birdie call it singing.”

But Frances threw a handkerchief over the cage, so that the bird stopped singing, and said impatiently:

“I can’t understand why you are so tremendously cheerful, now that you are engaged.”

“I’m not so ‘tremendously cheerful,’ ” answered Afra. “I’ve always been cheerful and am so now that I am engaged, although serious thoughts come.”

“A marriage of this sort, with the prospect of being tied to this hole of a place, wouldn’t make me happy, I know,” said Frances, turning away.

“What would make you happy, then?” asked Afra. “It is something to stay in your native place, married to the man of your choice.”

“Well, really, Afra, I can’t exactly say what I should like,” said Frances after a pause. “Everything here is so monotonous and humdrum. I know every one inside out, and that wearies me. If nothing wearied me, I might be happy. If I could become a great lady, now—that would please me.”

“Say Frau Majorin?”

“What are you thinking of, Afra? Majorin, indeed! What’s that? No, it must be a general or a count at least. Mightn’t I marry a prince?”

“Perhaps—or an emperor!”

“Oh, do you think so?” asked Frances eagerly.

“Yes, in a madhouse,” answered Afra coldly.

“Then Teles is to be a priest, and I am expected to rejoice at it,” grumbled on Frances. “I’m sure I never will. I might as well rejoice over becoming a nun myself, and I would rather be buried alive! How *can* I be glad about poor Teles?”

“If God calls him to His special service, it’s a high honor, and what more do you want?”

“Honor!” exclaimed Frances. “Is it very honorable to be curate or parish priest? They have neither title nor fortune. They are always being mixed up with common people, and are plagued with school-children. This doesn’t seem to me at all honorable.”

“But it does to other people, Fränz. Why, the Frau Majorin came to mother expressly to wish her joy.”

“If Teles becomes a bishop, and is received here under triumphal arches, with ringing of bells and cannon, and the houses are decked with garlands, and girls dressed in white, then I will rejoice, for that will be real honor.”

“Fränz, you are a naughty worldling! Just don’t let father hear your silly talk.”

Frances cast a rapid glance at the house to see if there was any one on the porch, and then said:

“Nobody is listening. . . . But I really don’t know what I shall be at when you have gone, Afra.”

“I shall be still in the town, Fränz, and it’s not large enough to keep us apart.”

"But you know what father is! In the morning we go to early Mass, and then we don't stir out till after supper—and not always then. And supposing even that I were to come to you in the evening, I couldn't really talk before your husband."

"I can't imagine, Fränz, what it is you always have to say. I believe it will be good for you not to talk so much, for it simply makes you pull things to pieces, and grow more discontented."

"I want a girl-friend, Afra, who will understand me, for really you don't understand me at all."

"Indeed I do, then, and very well too, for I'm trying to set your head straight on your shoulders," said Afra laughing. "If I were to listen to you and all your nonsense, I should get just as whimsical as you are."

"I take a great deal from you, but I must have some outlet for my feelings. I daren't speak to father or mother. Father has no time, and mother only gives me good advice, and never takes my view of things."

Afra laughed.

"You may draw the conclusion that your 'views' are stuff and nonsense," she said. "Do be reasonable, Fränz, and believe that father and mother know more and better than you and I."

But Frances kept her own opinion, and continued to be the element of contradiction in the house.

CHAPTER II.

SISTERS AND SUITORS.

WHILST Telesphor was intent upon his new vocation Franz von Strahl was quietly adopting art. Neither his mother nor his uncle encouraged him. To them an art career was beset with dangers. It was finally settled that Franz should matriculate at the Gymnasium. "In my free time, mother dear," he said gently, "I shall be moulding my little figures."

Shooting was the boy's amusement during the holidays, and Florestine was made happy by the gift of a horse from her father, who himself taught her to ride.

When Franz and Telesphor saw Florestine on horseback for the first time, Franz exclaimed :

"How nicely you and your horse would look in a sculptured group, Flore ! Only it's too difficult for me, especially the horse. But I will draw you both and put a falcon in your hand. I'll make you quite romantic and chivalrous."

"I don't care for romance and chivalry," said Telesphor. "I know that Fräulein von Cronenstein is real enough, and I mean to drop 'Flore' and 'Du,' and begin to say 'you' and 'Fräulein Florestine.'"

Florestine never rode through the town, so that a

year passed before Frances Herzog happened to see her on horseback. Afra had been married quite some time when one afternoon Frances came to her in a state of great excitement.

“O Afra! What would I give to be so fortunate! Why, I would give ten years of my life for it.”

“For what, Fränz?”

“For a horse!”

“It’s a pity that the postmaster has already married Agatha; he would be the husband for you, with his horses,” she replied with innocent sarcasm.

“Don’t call his miserable nags horses! They are mere jades, common beasts of burden. I mean a riding-horse, a dapple-gray, for instance. O Afra, how lovely they are! But why should Florestine be better off than I? What injustice there is in the world!”

“Are you going to pick a quarrel with God?” exclaimed Afra laughing.

“What does God trouble Himself about it?” asked Frances in return. “He has the great things of the world to look after; the sun, moon, and stars to keep in their places, so what does He care whether Frances or Florestine rides a dapple-gray? He has nothing to do with it. Men settle the business.”

“Fränz!” exclaimed Afra in a serious tone, “we are always taught that every hair of our head is counted. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our heavenly Father. You have heard it from your cradle, so how can you talk in this really impious way?”

"Yes, I hear it often enough . . . only I can't quite believe it," answered Frances.

"It's all your fearful vanity," said Afra. "Your silly thoughts are the birds of the parable who are always eating away the good seed from your heart."

"You are much better than I," said Frances with tears in her eyes. "You are happier, which accounts for it."

"How you do talk, Fränz! Certainly I am happier than you. I have always been contented, and you always discontented. What hinders you from being happy? It is your vanity again. You are always thinking about what other people have more than you. Just think a little about the thousands who have far less, or about those who have given up everything for the love of God."

"That's quite different," said Frances, impatiently.

"It proves that riches are not everything."

Afra's husband came in, and Frances broke off her conversation abruptly. "I must be going home," she said after a hasty greeting.

"Why so soon?" asked her brother-in-law.

"Since Afra has left home I have an immense deal to do," she replied. "Sometimes I have to attend to father's business people."

"It's good practice for you," he said laughing.

"Oh, don't!" she exclaimed impetuously. "I hate the very name of business, and nothing but father's wish induces me to bother myself with it."

"My dear child, I heartily wish you may never have worse things to do than attending to your father's business."

"I shan't if I can help it," exclaimed Frances snappishly, as she rose to go, with a cold good-by.

"And I should not wish to be Frances' liege lord," said her brother-in-law, with a hearty laugh.

"You are laughing, but I feel inclined to cry," said Afra. "How will it end?"

"End, my dear? Begin, you mean. Holy matrimony will settle it, and it won't be the first queer lot that it has managed. A sensible husband or plenty of trouble will do it."

"Oh, but Frances is quite by herself! It won't be so easy to get her to have a sensible man."

"Don't worry yourself about Fränz. She will come all right."

The prophecy was not speedily fulfilled. Frances made every one around her anxious and unhappy. It was the wish of old Herzog's heart to find a son-in-law who would become his partner and successor in the wood trade. He began to make formal inquiries amongst his business friends who had eligible grown-up sons. Old Kühn of Z. received a letter on the subject which he discussed with his son.

"Is the girl good-looking, father?" asked George phlegmatically.

"Bless me! No one with two eyes in his head could pick a hole in her. I have not seen her for three years, and in those days she was a girl in short dresses, with black eyes and hair, and very bonny."

Old Kühn wrote back to say that his son would leave "on business" the following Saturday, and pass the Sunday at X.

"I wonder whether he says 'bless me!' at every other word, taking after his father," remarked Frances, as they sat at supper.

"You would have been wiser to notice how many sensible things he said," replied her father, controlling himself.

"O father! as far as I can remember he was dreadfully common, and so was all that he said."

"I daresay you find your father 'dreadfully common,'" said Herzog.

"Fränz, you have forgotten the oil and vinegar. Fetch them quick—how am I to make the salad?" said Frau Herzog with ready tact. Frances rose and stayed away in the kitchen till she thought her father would have cooled down. Being sharp she said to herself, "George Kühn is coming on my account, but it won't do any good."

And so it turned out. He came, and Frances made herself as disagreeable as possible, so that there could be no question of any offer on his part.

Herzog immediately produced another string to his bow, and this time more successfully, as it seemed. The young man who now came "on business" to X. was gentlemanly, agreeable, good-looking, clever at his profession, and a thoroughly honest fellow. He was a constant visitor at the Herzogs, and thought Frances very pretty and nice. She noticed it, and made herself pleasant, for on her part she liked him.

"You have my 'God speed you,'" said old Herzog; "but you must have it out yourself with my daughter."

Herr Birger required no second telling. Frances was pleased at his proposal, still she avoided giving a definite answer.

"What do you mean by it, Fränz?" asked Agatha. "Why don't you say a plain 'yes' or 'no' to Birger? You see that he is getting fonder of you every day, and you know how the marriage would please father and mother. It's mere trifling."

"I must give myself a fair trial," said Frances, with a mock modest air.

"Nonsense! I know what you are, and *you* know quite well what you mean to do."

"I wonder whether Birger has been grumbling about me," said Frances to herself. "What bores these men are! They want me to say a rapturous 'yes' on the spot. After all, I'm civil to Birger."

She played with him for some time longer, making them all think she could not possibly draw back. But they were wrong. When the proposal was made, Frances revealed her real mind. She met Birger's earnestness by saying affectedly: "So you want to settle down here? This obliges me to refuse you, as I could not possibly stay on at X."

He looked at her in speechless astonishment, and then said: "Would you prefer my native place?"

"No, Herr Birger," said Frances icily. "My father wishes me to marry, but for the present *I* wish to be free."

Birger left her without a syllable. Old Herzog listened pensively to what the rejected suitor had to tell him.

"God help us, Birger," he said in a dejected, broken

voice, "and as for you, you deserve a better wife than Frances. I feel her conduct even more than you do, for she leaves me no hope."

Frances solaced herself by saying: "If I marry at all, I shall marry to please myself and not other people."

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR RABENER.

AFRA was no longer living at X. Her husband, a first-rate mathematician, had been called to the Gymnasium of a larger town after two years' professorship at X. A Dr. Rabener was living in the same house, and when illness knocked at their door, they found him out and became very friendly. He was always welcome, even when he came unprofessionally, for he was the best man in the world, and talked about fraternity and benevolence as nobody else could, Afra thought. Through his frequent visits he came to know the Herzogs as if he had spent all his life at X. One day he found Afra in tears, and she told him of their family trouble about Frances. The girl was not happy at home, yet she refused very good offers for mere whims, and no one could make her see reason.

"Wouldn't it be a good thing to remove the cause of discord?" asked Dr. Rabener.

"Of course, Doctor, but who is to do it?" exclaimed Afra, drying her tears.

"*You* might very easily, *Frau Professorin*. You can have your sister here for a little while. Parents will calm down, relations will forget, the young lady herself will come to a better state of mind, and her presence will do you much good."

The scheme found favor at X., and Frances was overjoyed. The prospect of a journey, and several weeks in a large town delighted her. What would she not see and hear and do? She dreamt of the wonders that were to take place.

"Dear, dear!" said Agatha impatiently. "Don't go and imagine any silly nonsense. People there walk about on their two legs just as they do here."

"All the same I shall at last emerge from this oyster-shell of a place!"

"Try to come back in a better frame of mind," answered Agatha sharply.

"And don't hurt our tender feelings," said gentle Apollonia Hellmut. "You know how father loves his little town, and how he is always hoping to get a partner and successor through you."

"I will not foster father's hopes, for I am sick and weary of the wood trade," answered Frances snapishly.

"Stupid girl!" growled Agatha, but Apollonia kept silence, for fear of angering her sister more.

Frances arrived safely at Afra's, and was so delighted with everything that she became quite pleasant. Her whole manner and conduct, her talk and expression of face changed. Good Professor Stark at once noticed the difference, and he saw for the first time, he said, what a pretty girl Frances was.

She managed to make herself uncommonly happy, not because she was in a large town, but because she liked Dr. Rabener's society.

"O Afra, what an interesting man that is!" she

said with great enthusiasm. "One could listen to him all day long."

"And he isn't a prince, or a general, or even a count," laughed Afra.

"Princes aren't to compare with him, Afra! And didn't you hear what he was saying about the so-called upper classes having lived their day, and being worn out? They're fast going down the hill, and the citizen is coming to the fore."

"Did he say all that?" asked Afra in surprise.

"Indeed he did. I could not find words for these great thoughts, although I've had them in my mind."

"I don't always follow him on these high-flown subjects—I am too ignorant. But when he speaks of charity I am quite impressed."

"But you must call it humanity, not charity, Afra."

"Rabener says it's all the same; then why not call it so?"

"Humanity sounds more elegant. In any ordinary sermon you may hear about charity."

"You are a curious girl, Fränz. But I must tell you that I prefer the language in which I have been born and bred, and that's plain German."

"Well, I prefer Dr. Rabener."

Dr. Rabener at once remarked the extraordinary impression which he made upon Frances. It was exactly what he intended. He much desired a good match, and soon found out that Afra's father was old and well-to-do. It also seemed likely that he might profitably set up at X., for old Dr. Hellmut was not immortal, and people were shy of the young man.

But he had not foreseen how pretty Frances would be, nor how quickly she would be taken with him. After a fortnight of frequent intercourse his visits suddenly stopped. When the third day passed, and no Dr. Rabener appeared, Frances could not conceal her agitation. She did not open her mouth, and looked deadly pale. On the fourth, Afra sent up-stairs to him, asking him to come. His manner was constrained. He looked eagerly round the room, and seemed relieved to find Afra by herself. After she had innocently expressed surprise at not seeing him for "three whole days," he owned to a secret. He loved Frances, he said, and had kept away, not knowing if his love was returned, or if her family would approve of him as a suitor.

"Your sister, with her beauty and her money prospects, may look much higher," he concluded. "I have nothing to offer her but my practice."

"That is a good deal, for you are so clever that you are sure to make your way," answered Afra.

"Then you allow me to hope!" he exclaimed. Afra was reflecting on her answer when the door opened and Frances walked in, flushing with pleasure when she saw who was there. He turned quickly towards her, and said earnestly: "Will you consent to make me happy and be my wife?"

"Yes," said Frances, resolutely.

"Only don't be too hasty," suggested Afra. "Let us wait to hear what they say at home."

"Then I shall be kept in suspense," said Rabener.

"No, you won't be," answered Frances. "I am quite determined to maintain my yes."

And so she was. She was enraptured with her engagement, and early as it was in the day, talked over all her plans with Rabener. Settling at Z., he told her, was an impossibility, so he would try X., where the Hellmuts were in possession. In case of an epidemic they could not possibly suffice. Frances would much have preferred the larger town, but she could not endure the thought of being parted from Rabener. Furthermore, the oyster-shell would certainly become a paradise with him in it. These were her feelings as she returned home, to find her father had quite other views for her.

Some Guldmans were engaged in the wood-trade at X. One of them had made a fortune in America, and Vincent Guldman was his heir. It was now rumored that he was on his way to Germany, and old Herzog had set his heart upon Vincent marrying his Fränz and uniting the firm of Guldman and Herzog. And now Frances' foolishness shattered his hopes. He could not control his vexation, and lost no opportunity of declaring that he would never give his consent to the Rabener marriage. Frances only clung to it the more.

Of course Vincent Guldman was the talk of the place. Even Frances in her own mind was excited about the millionaire's arrival. She sat at the window and saw his post-chaise stop at his mother's unpretending house, and envied those who could drive post-horses. Vincent Guldman had made his plans with great precision, and now he carried them out with a rapidity far beyond his plodding fellow-townsmen. He went straight to old Herzog, and asked

him if he was minded to become his partner. If not, he said, he would give up his business, sell his provision of wood at X., and return to New York.

Herzog was obliged to decline an offer which was the wish of his heart, for he could not meet alone the burden of present work and future provision. Vincent Guldman did not wait to hear more. He rushed out of the house without even greeting Frau Herzog. Soon afterwards he left X., not, however, before bestowing rich gifts upon the church and poor, so that his charity was the talk of the place.

"I am quite weary of hearing about Vincent Guldman," said Frances impatiently. "When will it stop?"

"It's pleasant to hear of so much charity," said Apollonia Hellmut.

"At all events it is very humane," remarked Frances coldly.

"What a senseless word that humane is! Say it is Christian, Fränz."

"My dear Agatha, is it Christian of him to wish school Sisters to be brought here?" asked Frances, in a tone of contempt.

"What is it, then?" asked Apollonia and Agatha, fairly startled.

"It is bigotry. He wants to make teaching Sister of your daughters."

"Ah, this is what you get in those long letters from Dr. Rabener!" exclaimed Agatha, angrily.

"What do you know about his letters?" asked Frances, blushing; "and why shouldn't I write to him?"

"I only hope he doesn't indoctrinate you with these dreadful views, for they are not yours," said Apollonia.

"But they are!" answered Frances, bridling up. "I have always had these views."

The sisters were interrupted in their talk by Apollonia's eldest daughter rushing into the room, almost shouting: "Come quickly. Grandpapa has been taken ill. He's going to die."

They all hurried into the garden, and found the old doctor stricken with apoplexy. He was at once removed to the house, and regained sufficient consciousness to apprehend his state and to receive all the last rites, after which he quietly expired.

Probably Frances Herzog was the only person in the town who was pleased at this death. Indeed, she felt inclined to credit Dr. Rabener with a prophetic spirit for saying three months previously that old Dr. Hellmut was not immortal. This wonderful prediction was now accomplished, and it brought the possibility of Rabener's settling at X. within grasp.

A little while afterwards people at X. heard to their great astonishment that a certain Dr. Rabener was coming as district doctor to X., with the title of *Medizinalrath*. Frances was the first to tell the news triumphantly to her father and mother. The penniless stranger was now a *Herr Medizinalrath*, and, therefore, an honorable member of society. Afra, too, looked on his suit with favor, and was proud of her future brother-in-law. Her husband had certainly cautioned her in his mild way: "Don't burn your

fingers, Afra, with this business," he had said. "Perhaps you may be sorry for carrying so many coals to Fränz' love-kitchen."

"Poor Fränz must have some one to help her."

"She seems to me well able to manage her own affairs, and I would rather you did not meddle with them. For if what I have heard is true, your father would be beside himself."

"What have you heard then?" asked Afra.

"That Rabener is a Freemason."

"O, it can't be true," she said. "But it shall soon be cleared up, for I will ask him."

"No, let it alone. He would not tell you the truth, as he knows your family well enough to be sure that they would not receive a Freemason."

Afra held her tongue and kept her counsel. A few days afterwards she came to her husband with a beaming face.

"Now I can give you exact information about Rabener," she said. "I simply asked him to what secret society he belonged. He answered, 'Have you never heard of the Vincent Society?' 'Of course I have,' I said, 'but that is no secret society. It is very well known, and is authorized by the Church.' 'There are various societies,' he said, 'which have the same end as St. Vincent's Conference: the prosperity, happiness, and education of the greatest number,—only they don't give it out openly, and for my part I prefer the *incognito*.'"

"And where is the 'exact information' all this time?" asked Professor Stark.

"I tell you that he belongs to a society which

works secretly to make people happy," answered Afra, laying emphasis on all her words.

" You are a good creature, Afra, but you are not a genius of discernment," said Professor Stark, laughing, as he sat down at his writing-table.

What could Herzog say against the marriage when Rabener appeared as Herr Medizinalrath at X., and at once proposed for Frances? He gave his consent, and tried to put himself on a pleasant footing with his future son-in-law. Rabener was not congenial to any of them, to Telesphor least of all. There was great antipathy between the two.

One day when Rabener was dining with them, Telesphor said to him: " What is that Chinese contortion, Herr Medizinalrath, which you make, instead of the sign of the cross, before your meals ? "

" Do your studies extend to Chinese ? " asked Rabener in his turn. " I should have thought dog Latin was all you required."

" If you like to call Horace and Virgil 'dog Latin,' you may."

" I quite respect Horace and Virgil—they at least had a philosophy of their own. No, I was thinking of your Fathers."

" Aren't they *your Fathers* as well as mine ? "

" Nobody need trouble his head about the Fathers unless he is studying to be a priest," observed Frances.

" And if he doesn't trouble himself, how can he be sure about the 'dog Latin' ? " replied Telesphor.

At the close of the year Frances became the proud wife of Herr Medizinalrath Rabener. They settled down at Weingarten, the little house which had belonged to her grandmother, and Rabener christened it "our cottage."

CHAPTER IV.

OSWALD VON LAUINGEN.

FLORESTINE was riding back from a property which belonged to her father on the side of the hills opposite to Cronenstein. It was late in the afternoon and there was a rising fog. She was suddenly accosted by a horseman who had lost his way in the intricacies of winding paths from field and forest. He was struck by the security of her footing and her directions, and guessed that she was Fräulein von Cronenstein; he of course preserved his *incognito*. Whilst Florestine was out riding, her father received a letter from Baroness Frankenhausen, which gave him food for reflection. It ran :

“ DEAR JUSTIN :

“ Lauingen is here, and is extremely sorry to have missed you. As you know how very intimate we are with him, and as I know how hospitable you are, I comforted him by proposing that he should go to Cronenstein, promising to announce him and secure him a favorable reception, but nothing more. You understand me, don’t you ? He entered very warmly into my proposal, and will very soon make his appearance, for my poor husband is in bed with a heavy influenza, and is consequently only fit company for his wife.”

"Of course he is coming on Flore's account," said Frau von Strahl, handing the letter back to her brother-in-law.

"Where can she be in this fog? You can't see five steps in front of you," he said anxiously, going up to the window.

Her absence, however, was not the real cause of his anxiety. He felt indefinitely that the proposed visit might decide Florestine's future.

The Castle was lighted up as Florestine reached it, and came in to tell her father how she had done his commissions. "Lastly," she said, "I met a prince in disguise who had lost his way, and I found it for him."

"Who could it have been, Flore?"

"Goodness only knows! He wanted to go to X. I made him ride behind me and brought him out upon the highroad. He guessed directly that I was Fräulein von Cronenstein."

"I wonder whether there are any nasty people about?" asked Frau von Strahl.

"Oh, really, Aunt Augusta! How can you treat my prince in this ignominious way! He didn't look at all rascally."

She ran off to dress for dinner. She had hardly gone when a carriage drove into the courtyard and Count von Lauingen was announced. At dinner he said to Florestine: "We have seen each other before; I have to thank you for being here at all."

"Oh, is it you? I did not recognize you at first by lamplight," answered Florestine, cordially. "I am glad I put you on the right way, since it has brought you here."

"But, my dear Count, have you got a shadow, that you can ride and drive at the same time?" asked Frau von Strahl.

"I can't pretend to be so interesting," replied the Count, laughing. "I rode across the hills to Waldrast this morning, and sent my carriage on here, I myself losing my way in the meantime. Thanks to Fräulein von Cronenstein, I found it again."

"And how do you like our dear Waldrast?" asked Florestine.

"I always like places of pilgrimage," answered Lauingen. "There's something so peaceful about them."

"I am always sorry that the stations of the cross are not erected on the last stiff bit," said Herr von Cronenstein.

"Well, papa, you might long ago have put them up."

"Let us have them first at St. Francis' Mount," pleaded Telesphor.

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Florestine, "for charity begins at home."

"And, Uncle Justin, they must be well painted—not the rough wooden or plaster figures which are now in fashion. Better nothing than anything so ugly."

"You see I not only have petitions, but am even told how I am to grant them," laughed Herr von Cronenstein to Lauingen.

After dinner Herr von Cronenstein began to discuss polities with the Count. Franz took a pencil and sketched the first station of the cross on a torn

envelope. Florestine poured out the coffee and, addressing herself to Telesphor, asked after Frances and her husband.

"I hardly see her at all," he replied. "I am at work all day, and here in the evening."

"And don't you ever go to your sister's?"

"Yes, sometimes, though Fränz does not understand making a home. She is stuck-up and affected, sitting at books beyond her to educate herself, as she says. He stays for hours with his few patients to make people believe he has a large practice. Whenever I do see her we are safe to quarrel."

"O, but you shouldn't!" said Florestine. "Just think how your patience will be taxed as a priest."

"When I am with the Rabeners," went on Telesphor, without heeding her observation, "I am always put out, and in a disagreeable, not to say, hostile, state of mind."

"But, Telesphor, how can you talk so of your sister and her husband?"

"I can't help my feelings," he exclaimed. "And then, instead of being able to win them, they want to pervert me to their views, which are simply destructive of order and authority."

"I'm dreadfully sorry for poor Fränz. What do her parents think about it?"

"My father says nothing, but grieves the more. Rabener humbugs my mother, and Fränz is always telling her how happy she is."

They discovered during the evening that their guest was a musician. He played the piano with that full and melodious touch which betrays the

master's hand. At its close, as Herr von Cronenstein accompanied the Count to his room after prayers, Lauingen said, "What a delightful life you live at Cronenstein. Will you allow me to enjoy it for a few days?"

"Certainly. But I warn you that it is monotonous in the winter. We have scarcely any visitors. In the summer, on the contrary, we have a good many."

"That's a matter of perfect indifference to me. I so appreciate feeling perfectly at home."

Lauingen stayed three days. Before leaving he said to Herr von Cronenstein: "I should like to come back—but I must be honest. I want you to give me your daughter."

Cronenstein looked earnestly at the Count and replied: "Before I say yes or no, I must ask you a question, which you must answer on your honor as a Christian. I am aware that as a very young man you had an unfortunate passion for gambling, which you carried very far indeed. How about it now? Is it quite overcome?"

"Absolutely," answered Lauingen. "That miserable time was between my twentieth and twenty-fourth year, seven years ago now. I have put time between me and it, and I am quite cured."

"I will take your word for it. What you say agrees with Frankenhausen's account of you, and all that I have heard. For all that, Count, I must own I am not without fear about giving you Florestine; my only child, you know."

"It is only natural," replied Lauingen gently.

“But do you give me any hope at all? If not, I shall not come back.”

“I understand your feelings, Count, and I do not forbid you to hope.”

“O, that is everything!” exclaimed Lauingen heartily.

“Not without Flore, for it all depends on whether or no she likes you. I shall not interfere, but leave it all to her.”

“If she allows me to hope, it will be all right. I have a second request to make. Will you keep the past, or I should say one period of the past, strictly from her?”

“Certainly, Count. You give me your word of honor that it *is* absolutely past.”

On taking his leave Lauingen said to Florestine: “Your father allows me to come back at Christmas. Will you have a Christmas-box for me?”

“Of course I will. . . . If I only knew what you would like,” she said naively. “Perhaps between now and then I may think of something very nice, and besides, the smallest thing is welcome with the Christmas-tree and the crib.”

“If only you would think of the right thing,” said Lauingen.

“Is there really anything you want?” asked Flore, fairly astonished.

“Graf Lauingen would hardly be mortal if he didn’t want something,” said Herr von Cronenstein laughing.

“O, I was only thinking of Christmas presents,” she said innocently.

Lauingen went off full of joyful anticipation. A fortnight later Florestine received a somewhat mysterious letter from her cousin. It contained at least a pithy postscript: "I hear that Lauingen has come back enchanted with Cronenstein and its inmates, particularly the Cronenstein *ladies*, and that he is shortly going back. I shall have a special wish for you, dear Florette, to add to my new year's greeting: that when next we meet you may be Gräfin Lauingen."

CHAPTER V.

YES OR NO?

CHRISTMAS had come, and Oswald von Lauingen was back at Cronenstein. It was, he thought, the first time he had really understood what Christmas meant, for Florestine drew him into the atmosphere of her own piety and joy and happiness. To him she was the incorporation of the *Gloria in Excelsis*.

Herr von Cronenstein had given the chapel a nice little organ for Christmas, and Florestine wanted to surprise him with a grand performance.

"You must help us," she said to Lauingen. "We should so like to sing Hasse's *Te Deum* on the last day of the year."

"That's bold. Where will you get the strings?"

"We will do without. We will pick out the best voices, and if you would only direct our practising, it would go splendidly."

"Only I have never played the organ."

"You needn't now. You can accompany us on the piano. The organist will come for the evening itself."

"Well, I'll try, on condition that the singers are not too unmanageable."

"Oh, we're not at all unmanageable," she said brightly.

"And where are we to sing? In the drawing-room your father would hear every note."

"I have a piano in my room, which will answer our purpose perfectly well."

The prospect of the practisings delighted Lauingen, as they were to take place at Florestine's piano, and he would thus have an opportunity of seeing her room. When they met for their first practice, great, therefore, was his disappointment to find himself in a stately apartment furnished in blue damask.

"How do you like our concert-room?" asked Florestine.

"It is not your room, is it?" asked Lauingen.

"Oh, no, it's a smaller drawing-room which we use occasionally. I have had my piano put here. I only hope the moving has not damaged it any."

It was not the piano, but the Count, who was somewhat "out of tune." He rubbed his hands, saying :

"It's cold here. It makes one's fingers stiff."

Enthusiasm soon warmed them, and on New Year's Eve the *Te Deum* was produced with great success.

The next day Florestine and her father and Lauingen were in the library, looking at some copper-plates, when Herr von Cronenstein was summoned away. Florestine would have continued her inspection of the plates, but Lauingen put his hand over them, and said eagerly :

"What will you wish me for the new year? You can make me happy by a single word!"

"Can I?" she asked.

"Yes ; how can you doubt it? You know I love you, Florestine. Can you give me any love in return?"

"Perhaps I could—but . . . I am not grand enough for your great world."

"If that's your only fear——"

"What does my father say?"

"He is on my side, provided that you are. Are you?"

"I must think about it," she said softly.

"Why must you think about it? Did it never strike you that I cared for you?"

"Sometimes it did."

"Or that you might grow to care for me?"

She blushed slightly. "Yes, that has struck me too," she answered.

"Florestine, that is all I want!" exclaimed Lauingen, joyfully.

But Lauingen had to be contented with Florestine's "time for reflection." In three months, if she continued in the same mind, they would become engaged. With this promise Lauingen had to leave Cronenstein. If Florestine consented, the marriage was to be in May.

That winter was a serious time for Florestine : so are happiness and love to any one, if they are to prove genuine and lasting. It was an anxious time for Franz and Telesphor as well as for the girl. In the spring they were to pass the final examination of all. Telesphor was fairly sure of himself and reckoned on a brilliant success. Franz hoped to pass moderately well. Then they would part—one would go to the University, the other to the Academy of

Fine Arts. They worked most industriously, and many evenings which would have been formerly given to music and cosy talks, had to be sacrificed. Herr von Cronenstein and Frau von Strahl were only too conscious of it, and they foresaw their loneliness with heavy hearts, for Florestine's father had no doubt at all about her consent. If she had not been attracted by Lauingen, it would not have taken her so long to say no.

"It will be 'yes,'" he said, when Frau von Strahl raised doubts.

* * * * *

The winter was a long honeymoon to Dr. Rabener and his wife. She adored her husband, and he allowed himself to be adored, and began to take steady root in X. One day the Mayor's wife came to Apollonia Hellmut—they had been friends as girls—and said in a tone of great importance, "Lonchen, I have something to say to you. We shan't be interrupted, shall we?"

"The children are at school, and my husband has driven out to the country, so you needn't fear an interruption, dear Bärbchen," answered Apollonia in her kind way.

"We are old friends, Lonchen, and so I know that you won't mind what I am going to say."

"No, of course not. Only tell me what it is."

"Well, then, Lonchen, my husband has got very intimate with the Medizinalrath. He is such a wonderfully clever man—the Medizinalrath, I mean—that my husband as Mayor thinks he ought to patronize him a little. So we, or rather he, is determined

to make him our family doctor. Your husband is an old friend, but he has such an immense practice that he won't miss one family, whilst coming to our house is a great thing for Rabener."

"The choice of a doctor is a personal matter," said Apollonia, a little bit touchily. "My husband brought your children through scarlet fever and you through typhus, and Rabener has given you no proof of his skill, but, of course, if he inspires you with confidence, there's nothing to be said."

"Only don't be so hasty, Lonchen, dear," answered the Mayoress. "Your husband *did* pull me and the children through, but he came to us instead of his father, who was then living."

"What does that matter as long as the children got well? That's the point," replied Apollonia.

"I merely wanted to imply that Dr. Hellmut then had the benefit of his father's advice and experience," said the Mayoress, laying stress on her words.

"You speak as if you had got Rabener by heart, Bärbchen," exclaimed Apollonia somewhat impatiently, "and that rather damages what you say. Do as you please."

"We can hardly help giving our practice to your brother-in-law, and I thought you would not grudge it to him. Fränz must have told you how very intimate we have become."

"Certainly, Fränz has told me that you meet twice a week to hear Rabener read. Still I don't see why the one man should be lecturer, friend, and doctor. However, if you have more confidence in Rabener, take him."

"Won't you join our circle, Lonchen?" asked the Mayoress. "If you only knew how interesting the reading is, you wouldn't lose a moment."

"What are you reading?"

"Shakespeare's tragedies, Goethe's Faust, natural history—it varies."

"I wonder that your husband can care so much about it, Bärbchen."

"He doesn't like tragedies, but natural science interests him immensely. He was so pleased to discover that the most learned men make the world not 6,000 years old, as we were taught, but perhaps 60,000, or much more."

"And why was he so pleased?"

"Because man is worthy of the truth," said the Mayoress solemnly.

"So we were taught lies and fables?"

"Yes, Lonchen, and there's a reason for it."

"A reason for it? My dear Bärbchen, do drop this mysterious tone. We all know there can be no reason for teaching us falsehoods."

"Indeed, there is then. The priests can teach what they please, and of course they know nothing about science. The Bible makes the world out to be 6,000 years old, so nothing else can be taught. But of course it's as clear as daylight that all the earth's physical revolutions, the Pyramids and the Egyptian kings, and the petrified men—in Mexico, is it not, or somewhere there?—must have required more than 6,000 years—"

"My dear Bärbchen," said Apollonia compassionately, "don't be imposed upon by Rabener. Any

one who looks down upon the Church and Holy Scripture has not a leg to stand upon, and he says and preaches just what comes into his head. This is as clear as daylight to me, and I entirely fail to see why I am to believe that priests are more narrow-minded than Rabener and his books. As to your proposal for my joining your party in the evening, I am very much obliged to you, but I can't leave my children to themselves two whole evenings, and I like my husband to find me at home when he comes."

" You are a good creature, Lonchen, but you ought to pay more attention to intellectual culture, especially as you are fortunate enough to have that clever and highly intellectual Medizinalrath in your neighborhood."

" We were too simply brought up to look beyond our station. Fränz always had more ambition."

" That's why she got a husband who has not his equal for distinction in X.!" exclaimed the Mayoresse.

" I doubt if your view is general," replied Apollonia. " I certainly don't share it."

" I hope you won't mind the doctor business," said the Mayoresse, rising to go. " You will understand that we couldn't help ourselves."

" O, of course not!" laughed the doctor's wife.

" That's something off my mind," said the Mayoresse, when she had summoned her husband from his shop to her side. " Hellmut is dismissed and Rabener is our doctor for the future."

" Well done, Bärbchen! God grant we mayn't require him—as a doctor, I mean," answered the

Mayor, absently, for he was intent on his customers. He had a good grocery business, and his wife was the sister of the wealthy Vincent Guldman. It was she, not he, who ruled the house, and this Rabener had discovered.

So the winter and the winter storms passed away. The wood anemones were lifting up their tender blue heads; the stork flapped his wings over his winter nest, the woodcock appeared, and the lark trilled its familiar yet ever new spring song. A slight mist hung over the hills, and a changing play of colors on the heights. The river flowed along in its full tide, and the brooks rippled merrily.

One lovely morning Florestine sought out her father with the words: "Won't it be too hard for you to do without Flore?"

It was what he had been expecting, yet the certainty overwhelmed him. Doing violence to himself he said: "At last! Only the day before yesterday I had a letter from Lauingen, reminding you that probation is nearly over!"

"Had you, dear papa?" she said eagerly, flushing. "Then *he* is the same. Tell him that I have quite made up my mind and that he may come."

"God bless you, my own Flore!" said her father, making the sign of the cross on her forehead.

"Is all happiness marked with the cross, papa?" she asked with emotion.

"Yes, all without exception, my child."

"I have always been so wonderfully happy that I should like to remain so. I can't imagine a troubled life, and don't know how I should bear it."

"You have been happy because you are a dear, loving child. But we are not meant to remain children, or to pass our time at childish things. Other duties await us, and we are to find our happiness in fulfilling them."

Lauingen lost no time in coming. Herr von Cronenstein greeted him very warmly, Frau von Strahl with some emotion, and Florestine with shy pleasure.

"But, dear Aunt Augusta," wrote Amelia Verden to Frau von Strahl, "how can you possibly manage all the trousseau in four weeks, and at Cronenstein too! It's a dreadful notion of my uncle's, and a very unpractical one. An engagement should be long enough to allow the bride's mother full time to see to everything *con amore*. Make use of me as much as you like. I will willingly do any commissions for you, and do them well."

Frau von Strahl set Amelia Verden's mind at rest by telling her that they were ordering the principal items from Paris, and leaving the rest for Florestine to get as she liked. "Up to the present time," wrote Frau von Strahl, "she has been somewhat indifferent to the fashions, and for the matter of that, she is so exceedingly pretty that she may wear what she likes; she always looks nice. That's what Lauingen says. He doesn't find a four weeks' engagement a 'dreadful notion'; neither do I."

It was the first of May. Florestine was sitting on the rocky terrace under the budding limes. Lauingen was at his country place, making preparations for her reception. He was to arrive the following day with his mother and the wedding guests. The

marriage was to take place on the fourth. Telesphor and Franz were coming up the road from the town, arm in arm, and Florestine ran to meet them, saying :

"Oh, do come and sit down with me for the last time!"

"Yes, for the very last time as we are now," said Telesphor with a light in his fine eyes. "We are all of us 'giving our hands,'—you to a husband, Franz to art, and I to theology; so our paths will be cast wide apart."

"Outwardly, but not in reality," said Franz. "We have one and the same end in view."

"What would it matter if we never met again in this world, so long as we *do* meet again in Our Father's house?"

"O indeed! I can't agree to a separation for life," exclaimed Florestine. "I *must* see my old playmates and companions again. I'm not so heroic as you, Telesphor, and I believe that we shall sometimes meet here where we are all three at home."

"That's probable, but we shall be on quite a different footing," said Telesphor. "You will be a fine lady, and Franz an artist. Shall I be fit company for you?"

"We will try to be always fit company for *you*," said Franz.

"Franz, what was the painter's name who used to paint Our Lady on his knees?" asked Florestine.

"It was the Dominican, Fra Angelico da Fiesole."

"You must become another Angelico, Franz," she said.

"I have no talent for painting—I see that perfectly well already. Color is not my line, unfortunately, so I shall have to make my way at hungry art."

"My father would be very sorry to hear this, Franz."

"Yes, I know, Florette, and so I don't tell him. Still the fact remains. I could hardly rest satisfied with what was only pretty good."

"Nor I!" exclaimed Telesphor. "I should like to be a great preacher, electrifying thousands with eternal truths."

"It would require intense purity and holiness," said Florestine. "Pride would make even *this* vocation dangerous."

"But we are talking only of our future and not of yours, Florette, and yet yours will surely be rich and blessed as you are yourself," said Franz. "You may play a great part in the world and patronize your two old playmates."

"That's not at all in my way, Franz. My future will be as my past, I hope, calm and flowing as the river here."

Florestine cast a sorrowful glance over the landscape as she finished speaking. The hills were tinged with the blush of spring in the trembling rays of the setting sun, and the river with its shining waters appeared as a silvery thread between the fresh green of field and valley. Whence came the river? Whither was it going? It wound in and out amongst the hills, which seemed to shelter its doings and to hide its further course.

The chapel bells were ringing for the May devo

tions. Florestine leaned back, and thought to herself sorrowfully: "Oh, my happy Cronenstein days! How sorry I am to bid you farewell."

They all went in to Benediction, and Florestine prayed earnestly that her love might be strong as death, and bring her nearer to God.

Four weeks later Cronenstein Castle was deserted. The two who remained in solitude liked to sit in Florestine's favorite place under the limes, and there they talked of their absent children. Spring was over, though it was still May.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO YEARS LATER.

Two years had gone by, and, as far as X. was concerned, the changes they brought about mostly affected Dr. Rabener and Telesphor Herzog. Rabener was looking out for a larger house, for whether it was due to the lady Mayoress' patronage or to his own ability, the fact remained that he was superseding Dr. Hellmut. Frances was triumphant. The town of X. had to thank her for this wonderful man, for it was she who had attracted him to it, whereas he might have made himself conspicuous in a larger sphere. She was scarcely pleasanter than in her maiden days, and people forgot to notice her prettiness.

"You remind me of the jester in the pantomime," said Agatha, who was always trying to bring Frances down from her heights to the dead level of X.

"What a comparison!" said Frances, shrugging her shoulders.

"A true one, though. Nobody pays any attention to the jester's nonsense, yet still he goes on with it," said Agatha.

"Most sisterly sentiments, certainly," remarked Frances.

"I'm not talking of myself, but of other people!"

"People don't like me because I treat the town of X. as it deserves to be treated, that is, as a silly, cackling place," answered Frances haughtily.

Then it was rumored that Telesphor Herzog had given up the priesthood. He had written vaguely to his father and mother, telling them that he had "no vocation" and should take up "another line."

"The boy was shamming all the time," exclaimed the old man angrily. "He didn't want to go into business, and he dragged my consent out of me by pretending that he meant to be a priest."

"No, no, it was no sham," said Frau Herzog with the tears in her eyes. "He quite meant it. What can have happened to him? If he would only come here at the end of the summer, we might find out."

"He's not coming because he's got a bad conscience," said the old man sorrowfully.

Apollonia shared her parent's grief. Agatha's blood was up, and she said: "Why, the silly boy might have stayed here and gone into father's business!"

"Teles' eyes are opened at last," remarked Frances. "Last summer when he was here for the holidays, my husband told him they would be."

"Teles has never paid attention to what your husband said, Fränz," exclaimed Agatha bitterly.

"Indeed he did last year," answered Frances proudly.

When she told her husband the news, he broke out, in a delighted tone: "I have not felt so glad for a long time! Now the clever young fellow has hopes

of enjoying his life and becoming a useful member of society! He's not made for a cassock."

"But what will he do next?" asked Frances.

"Never mind, Frances. There'll be one priest less in the world."

Franz von Strahl had been living for two years in the capital, attending its Fine Art Academy. His fellow-students called him the "aristocrat," and the word applied to his spiritual nature, which was ever dwelling on what is highest and noblest. Oswald and Florestine von Lauingen spent two months every winter at the capital, and so did Florestine's father and aunt. They, especially Franz, lived over again the delightful, never-to-be-forgotten Cronenstein days.

One day as Franz was sitting in his room, buried in thought, some one knocked at the door, and Franz, without stirring a finger, uttered a careless "Come in." But the visitor remained standing in the open door, looked at him for a moment, and then said "Franz!"

The familiar epithet effectually startled Franz out of his musings, for no one called him by his Christian name.

"You, Teles! What brings you here?" he said brightly. "Oh, now we shall find out everything!"

"Do you think you will?" asked Telesphor.

The two friends sat looking at each other, and noting the changes of two years. Again Franz said: "But speak, Teles. Tell me what brings you here and what you want. It's nothing bad, is it?"

"On the contrary, it's something very good, or at

any rate, something which promises well. But it will astonish you, just at first ; that is, before you know everything."

"Never mind, only speak."

"I am not going to be a priest," said Telesphor, in a short, cold tone of voice.

Franz started. "Not going to be a priest ? and why not ?"

"It isn't my vocation, and I am glad to have found it out."

"Have you really found it out, Teles ? Dispassionately, without——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Telesphor, "and I've told my father and mother. They're a little bit surprised, as you are, although I think you should understand how it is."

"Perhaps I may when I hear what has moved you to it," said Franz.

"You shall hear, only not now, not to-day. Tell me about yourself. What are you doing ? Do you like your work ? Are you getting on ? Will you be able to make it answer ?"

Telesphor asked these questions rapidly and disconnectedly, as if his thoughts were miles away. Franz noticed it. The two friends were no longer at ease. Franz was reserved and Telesphor agitated. Telesphor said that he had lodgings already, and meant to study medicine, adding :

"I shall at least be certain of making myself useful to my fellow-men."

"Weren't you equally sure of that in becoming a priest ?" asked Franz.

"No, because it wasn't my vocation. You can't do people good unless you are thoroughly in earnest. When a man's that, he sticks to duties, be they hard or easy. But let a man be in doubt, then all elasticity leaves him, and he just drags himself wearily along."

"That's quite true," remarked Franz.

"When I left X. I was too young and inexperienced—too new altogether—to make up my mind to become a priest. In the course of these two years I have grown wise and prudent."

"And are you happy now? I mean at rest in your mind?"

"At rest in my mind? No, Franz, I'm not at rest, but there's a reason why I'm not. You shall know all about it. Good-by."

He rushed out, and Franz, as he watched from the window, saw him disappearing down the street.

Time went by. Telesphor did not come back, and Franz thought he would make inquiries of the University tutors whether Telesphor had matriculated, so as to trace him out.

One lovely summer evening Franz had gone out for a drive with his cousin, Amelia Verden, and her husband. The large park of the Residenz was nearly deserted.

"If it weren't so delightfully cool under the beautiful trees, the solitude would bore me to extinction," said Amelia.

"Here come three individuals to break the magic spell of solitude, and if I'm not mistaken little Lisa Rink is one of them."

"Lisa Rink!" exclaimed Amelia and Franz in one breath, turning to Count Verden.

"Yes, it is Lisa," said Amelia. "But look, Franz. Your old Cronenstein chum is with her."

"Teles—and Lisa Rink!" exclaimed Franz incredulously. As the three figures approached, he saw Telesphor distinctly, and Telesphor recognized them, too, by a greeting.

"Lisa Rink seems to me a dangerous companion for a theological student," said Count Verden, laughing, to Franz, whilst Amelia added: "She is really a lovely creature. Haven't you seen her before, Franz?"

"No," he answered, in a dazed tone.

"But you've heard of her?"

"Yes."

"You're much too good for this world," said Amelia. "Your seminarist has quite upset you. Now, you see how frivolous the world is! I propose that you should go with us to the Vorstadt Theatre some night when Lisa Rink is playing one of her great parts, supposing, that is, that we can get tickets. That little theatre is very pleasant, for in the midst of summer nearly all the audience are away, and the manager has been lucky in unearthing Lisa Rink just at this moment. A little theatre-going occasionally is a necessity of life, so you mustn't be horrified at your friend."

"I'm not horrified, only I'm surprised."

"When you see Lisa Rink your surprise will diminish considerably, if it doesn't disappear altogether. Your friend may still become a very good priest."

"I don't doubt it—if he still has the wish," answered Franz.

"In any case you will be wiser to keep Lisa Rink well out of the way," said Count Verden.

"But he must see Lisa on the stage," said Amelia eagerly. "Young people must amuse themselves, you old Cato."

It was very early the next morning, and Franz was just going out, when Telesphor burst unceremoniously into his room.

"You saw me yesterday," he said. "I will tell you all. Every day I've been wanting to come to you, but I couldn't find the time. Now, listen to my story."

"Directly," answered Franz; "but first I must go to Mass, for I've kept to my Cronenstein ways of beginning the day with it."

"You can go to Mass when I've finished talking," said Telesphor impatiently. "Now I've come to have a good talk."

"It won't hurt you to hear Mass first," said Franz gently, and without more ado he took Telesphor by the arm and led him into a neighboring church.

"Don't you go to daily Mass?" he asked on the way.

"Well—no, I've no time," said Telesphor with a little constraint, "and it isn't an obligation."

"Do you still believe all you used to believe?"

"Not quite—but the essentials, and—well, perhaps I do believe it all, too."

Franz was silent, and wondered to himself whether his friend's reason was affected. Telesphor knelt motionless during Mass, covering his face with

his hands. Was it trouble, or prayer, or abstraction? They returned in silence.

"Now, then, unbosom yourself," said Franz; "for I see well enough you've a load on your mind."

"Oh, why did I ever leave home!" burst out Telesphor. "Why didn't I keep to my father's wood-yard and carry on his business as he so much wished! I should have been peaceful and contented now!"

"You thought you had a different calling, but if you were wrong, go home now. Your father will welcome you."

"Hardly, when he finds that I want to take Lisa Rink to him as a daughter-in-law."

"You unfortunate Telesphor! Have you been listening to a fair tempter?" asked Franz sorrowfully.

"She may have been an angel, and I believe she was, I believe it most firmly," answered Telesphor with deep conviction. "If I didn't think so, if the devil's scheming my ruin, then let him have it! But, as I say, I will not, cannot, believe it. Now, let me tell you all that has happened in the two years since our days at home. I came to Y. full of zeal for my vocation and ardor for my studies. I found one or two first-rate professors, who combined the deepest science with great intellect and earnest faith. No work tired me, no labor was hard. I saw only three or four young fellows, who were as enthusiastic as I. Early morning and late evening found me at my books, and every day at Mass I prayed for a blessing on my work and my vocation. I was convinced that all my University time would run as smoothly. I

was greatly mistaken. My peace and happiness did not last much longer than the first term. O Franz! why doesn't God leave us in paradise? I had peace of soul, and desired nothing more, but it was not to last——”

“It should have been treated as a grace—not looked upon as a matter of course,” interrupted Franz. “It should have been held at the point of the sword.”

“Oh, do be quiet!” exclaimed Telesphor. “I know well enough all that it is usual to be told under similar circumstances, but it doesn't satisfy me.

“I had never troubled myself about the people in the house,” he continued. “One day I heard a gruff man's voice, raised in angry tones, with two crying women. A man came stumping down the stairs. It was the landlord, a shoemaker by trade, who was always very civil to me. I asked him what he had been at upstairs. Then he told me that he was obliged to press the occupant of the third story for rent. She was a widow with four children. I inquired about the woman's debt. It was very small, for the poor creatures lived in two rooms. I was not a Croesus, certainly, but I could well afford the little sum, and I gave it to the landlord, charging him to secrecy. At eleven o'clock that night Frau Rink knocked at my door, to thank me for my help. I found that she was not a Catholic and that she had a son who wished to be a priest. I invented a pretext for making Anthony's acquaintance. He was a fine-looking boy, very highly gifted, but ground down by their poverty. The winter flew by. Anthony came

to me every evening at six, but one night towards the end of Lent he did not appear. He was ill in bed. I went up to see him. He was in a state of high fever from a lung attack, he could not speak, his breathing was short, labored, and broken by a cough. I wondered how I could contrive to see him constantly without bothering his mother and sister."

Telesphor rose abruptly, took a turn up and down the room, and then stood before Franz.

"This is how it was," he said. "Was I wrong?"

"Of course not," answered Franz.

"Why was evil to come to me from a good action?"

"Because the devil is always busy, seeking whom he may devour."

"From Anthony's bedside I walked into the room where his sister Lisi was sitting at her millinery. It was full of warm sunshine and lighted up by the blue spring sky. Lisi got up as I came in. The sun's rays fell on her soft fair hair, surrounding her pretty head with a golden halo. Her bewitching, deep blue eyes had something in them of Anthony's tender gratitude, with a peculiar expressiveness of their own. On going into the room I was thinking as little of Lisi as I am now thinking of the Grand Turk. The sick boy quite engrossed me. I was captivated on the spot."

"It was the striking contrast between life and death which affected you," said Franz quietly.

"No, it was nothing of the sort. It was something absorbing and irresistible. It was love."

"Oh, what a fool you are!" cried out Franz, with a burst of uncontrollable feeling. "How could you let your prize be wrenched from you without a struggle?"

"Without a struggle?" asked Telesphor in a low tone.

"Striking the air is not fighting in earnest," exclaimed Franz.

"You just live through what I have lived through since that day,—then you'll know what fighting means," said Telesphor coldly, proceeding with his story.

"Anthony's illness ran its course. From inflammation of the lungs it turned to galloping consumption, and, after six weeks' suffering, he was gone. He knew that he should die, and told me so, but he hid it from his mother, who clung feverishly to the hope of his recovery. On the eve of Ascension Day he himself asked for the last sacraments, and on the feast itself he died. I need not tell you that I passed hours, days, and nights at his bed, and I may add that I should have done as much if there had been no Lisi. Sometimes I did not see her for several days. I was too overcome with sorrow and anxiety about Anthony to give heed to any other feeling. But after his death it seemed to revive with double force."

"Ah, Teles, why did you lose through the sister what you had gained through the brother?" said Franz. "Why didn't you avoid the girl after Anthony's death? Why didn't you throw yourself with redoubled energy into your studies? If you ex-

amined yourself you must have known that your feelings were out of harmony with your vocation."

" On the contrary, I thought my vocation required me to throw myself heart and soul into the work of gaining Lisi and her mother to the faith. Well, another term, the third, was up in August. My books no longer attracted me in the same way. I was pre-occupied, and found study dry and even distasteful. I should have welcomed the holidays, if they had not meant a second parting from Lisi. I put off my journey to X. from week to week. At last, I had to make up my mind to it. When I told Lisi, she said, 'We are losing our only friend!' It was a dreadful visit. On the one hand, because I saw plainly for the first time what misery it was to be away from her; and, on the other hand, because all the memories of the past seemed to hold me in their power. I went to see your uncle. His clear eye read the struggle which was going on. 'You are no longer what you were last year, Teles,' he said kindly. Unfortunately, my brother-in-law, Rabener, also discovered my struggle. I don't know what uncanny instinct told him what was going on in me, and just when I was fighting hardest, he would add to my perplexity by remarking how foolish it was to turn away from life's good things. He once said to me, 'If you must have theology, follow Dr. Martin Luther's example. Write, and preach, and teach to your heart's content, but marry a wife and enjoy your life.' Sometimes I thought to myself how pleased my old father would be to be told that I was going into his business. It would have humbled me to return to my father's

wood-yard after my years of study, and to disappoint the wishes and hopes of my relations and friends. The holidays were nearly over. The thought of seeing Lisi again thrilled me with delight. Your uncle sent for me suddenly one day, and said :

“ ‘ I am going to-morrow to Florestine’s at Seeheim. Come with me, Teles.’ ”

“ I started back, I was so taken by surprise.

“ ‘ Do come,’ he said in a still kinder tone. ‘ It will do you good to have an entire change of scene with your old friends.’ ”

“ ‘ I must go back to Y.,’ I exclaimed.

“ ‘ Yes, but through Seeheim,’ he said. ‘ I must ask you to do this for my sake, Teles.’ ”

“ And you refused ? ” exclaimed Franz sorrowfully. “ You refused to take the hand outstretched to help you ? ”

“ Yes, I did,” replied Telesphor in a low tone. “ There was something in me which refused to be saved, and I listened to it that day. When your uncle and mother were leaving, I could have run after the carriage, flung myself beneath the wheels, and begged to be taken. It was too late ! ”

“ Indeed it wasn’t,” burst out Franz. “ It is not even now too late ! ”

“ The die is cast ; there’s no altering it,” interrupted Telesphor. “ I can’t go back to my old home, and couldn’t if I desired it with my whole soul. I can as little go back in a spiritual sense, or return to a former state of mind in which I did not know my true self. Well, I went back to Y. I had scarcely arrived before I bounded upstairs, in a thrill of de-

light and excitement at the thought of seeing Lisi. A change had taken place in their circumstances during my absence, Frau Rink told me, in consequence of an application she had made to her brother-in-law.

“‘And I am going to be an actress,’ interrupted Lisi, speaking and looking her delight. ‘Just fancy uncle saying that I have great talent, and could make a stir, and he knows what he’s talking about. He is manager to the small theatre in the capital. I shall make my appearance there. Oh, how delightful it is! I can scarcely believe it.’

“‘What do you mean? What are you going to be?’ I stammered, in a tone of horror.

“‘An actress! Don’t you congratulate me on my luck?’ exclaimed Lisi, overjoyed.

“My astonishment was so great that I could not utter a syllable. Frau Rink seemed not to like my silence, and she said coldly: ‘What makes you so surprised, Herr Herzog? At Lisi’s age talents easily come to light.’

“‘I didn’t know she had the slightest taste in this direction,’ I said.

“‘We didn’t know it either,’ said Frau Rink, ‘and how could we—for Lisi has done nothing but work since she was a child.’

“‘Father seemed to guess something, though,’ put in Lisi eagerly; ‘during his long illness when I used to read him Schiller’s tragedies, he would often say, “Well done, Lisi! You’re acting Fiesco [or whatever he’s called]—for me!” And I think I guessed something too, for when I sat at work the livelong

day I used to go over the pieces I had seen played. So I was not nearly so surprised as mother when my uncle said I must go on the stage. I believe it's my calling,' added Lisi with her bewitching laugh, 'just as it's yours, Herr Herzog, to become a priest.'

"I am very doubtful about mine," I answered, still quite dazed.

"Oh, so much the better, so much the better!" she exclaimed. "I should be so glad if you weren't to be a priest, because you once told me that priests don't go to the theatre, and I really do want you to see me act to have your opinion about it."

"How I wish I could get you a place with the same advantages and fewer dangers," I said. "No sacrifice would be too great."

"But as you cannot," put in Frau Rink, "I must beg you to let my poor Lisi alone, and not to put things into her head which she's too innocent to understand."

"I cannot describe my state of mind. Everything was chaos except my love for Lisi. It comforted me a little to think that she would stay at Y. all through the winter. She fascinated me to so great an extent that my studies were almost an impossibility. I went to a few philosophical lectures. Sometimes they interested me, sometimes I absolutely could not follow them, and so lost the thread and the whole point of the metaphysical proposition. I avoided my former professors, lost sight of my friends, and felt myself alone in the world, but I had Lisi, and that was enough. Of course I saw her every day, and sometimes without her mother. On one of these

occasions I told Lisi of my love, and was enchanted to hear that it was returned, much to Frau Rink's disgust and anger. During Lent Herr Rink sent for Lisi. She was to remain in his school till the summer, and then he was to bring her out. Her preparations were soon made, and so were mine. The capital offered more resources for my studies than Y., but my chief concern was to be near Lisi. Frau Rink was beside herself, and declared that her daughter's good name would suffer. I said her engagement would be a protection for Lisi, and she was on my side, which carried the day. We have been here since the first of March."

"Since March! five whole months!" exclaimed Franz.

"My torture has begun," continued Telesphor, not heeding his friend's expression of pain. "Lisi is no longer mine. Her uncle took possession of her at once. He was delighted with her talent, her quickness, her inimitable gift of acting, her charming voice, and her graceful movements. She was pleased with everything, and felt herself quite in her element. She introduced me to Herr Rink as her intended, and I was in a great way at his saying: 'O, nonsense, Lisi! it's only child's play. You are both a great deal too young to bind yourselves for life.'

"'We don't think so,' said Lisi, touchily.

"Herr Rink was a good-humored man. He added, 'Don't be vexed, my dear girl; I didn't mean any want of respect to your seventeen summers. And perhaps the gentleman has talent for the stage?'

"'Not the smallest,' I exclaimed in a fright, whilst

Lisi clapped her hands and cried out joyfully, ‘ That would be enchanting ! I couldn’t imagine anything nicer.’

“ ‘ Or perhaps the gentleman’s a poet ? ’ asked Herr Rink. ‘ He looks to me too interesting and too impressionable for a mere medical student.’

“ ‘ Why, uncle, how well you read faces,’ interrupted Lisi in high delight again. ‘ Yes, he’s a poet ! He can’t deny it—*I* have quantities of most beautiful poetry by him.’

“ ‘ Bravo ! ’ he said, clapping me on the shoulder. ‘ But leave lyric poetry alone, young man, and devote yourself to the drama. Write comedies, so that we needn’t be always tied to translations from the French. Write for Lisi. I am sure it will inspire you both.’

“ When I looked at Lisi’s joyful eyes, it seemed as though the glimmering spark of poetry within me burst into a bright flame, and I felt a longing to write a piece worthy of her and her talent which would associate my name with hers. But how could I find the time for working hard, seeing as much as possible of Lisi, and writing poetry ? How could I do it all ? And you wonder at my being here five months without coming to see you ?

“ I hid myself in the most remote corner of the theatre at Lisi’s first appearance. My opinion about her acting is not worth having, because I’m carried away as soon as I look at her ; but the thundering applause which she called forth showed that the public was carried away too. Her success was, of course, a great satisfaction to me, but a cross, too, for I was

jealous. That sea of applauding people had a certain right to Lisi's beauty and charms, and any one was free to express his admiration. She has been the public idol since that day, and lives in a constant whirl. She has no end of visits, rehearsals, and representations. I live opposite to her house. When I see that she's alone I make my way over to her at once, but alas, we're not left long undisturbed. Yesterday I was in the park with her mother and her for the first time since she has been on the stage. And this painful life full of torturing jealousy is now my life. I have to bear it, for Lisi is the whole world to me. Now you understand everything. Fare you well."

And Telesphor rushed out as stormily as he had come in.

"I will keep my own counsel, and pray to God that I may not be exposed to similar temptation," thought Franz to himself.

CHAPTER VII.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.

NOTHING is heard about the happiest marriage any more than about the happiest woman. This was true of Oswald's and Florestine's married life. Her husband was most devoted to her, her mother-in-law adored her, and she was loved and honored by all around her. It sometimes struck her that her father had prepared her for all sorts of crosses and trials, yet she could not descry the slightest cloud on her horizon. Full of life and intelligence, rich, and elegant, it is no wonder that she was the object of much attention. In spite, however, of the court which was paid to her, she remained impervious to flattery, a beautiful, smiling, sparkling star. It was Franz who made the comparison to Amelia Verden, one night at a ball.

"I always feel inclined to say, 'Look, there's the star,' when I see Flore at a ball, or amongst other women."

"Very flattering for Flore—less so for us," said Amelia. "What should you compare the rest of us to?"

"To flowers, Amelia, to a garden brimful of the choicest flowers!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps the

flowers are prettier and more taking, but a star's a star."

"I am beginning to think she's your polar star, Franz."

"There you're quite out, Amelia! I love her as I should a dear, kind sister, but she's not my polar star."

"Who is, then? You might as well tell me all about it, now that you've begun, and as I have no interesting secrets of my own, other people's fascinate me immensely. Now, tell me plainly, is art your polar star?"

"A secret joked about soon ceases to be interesting," he said laughing.

"Ah, now I know that you have one!" she exclaimed. "I only suspected it before. But to return to Florette, I must tell you I never thought that she would take her place in society so easily. I feared she would be stiff, mum, and stand-off."

"What on earth for, my dear Amelia?"

"How you question! Why, because of Uncle Justin's peculiar principles. He brought her up very seriously, had her educated by learned professors. I love and respect him all the same, especially now that I see how well his plan has succeeded with Flore."

"Don't you know what the Bible says, Amelia?"

"My dear Franz, don't expect the Bible from me. It must contain many things of which I have not the remotest notion."

"For instance, that piety is useful for everything, and this is what our peculiar uncle had in his mind for his daughter."

“ And for you, too ? ”

“ Only the soil in my case was less productive.”

“ Of course. Women are always a hundred times better than men.”

“ Not always, Amelia, though to make up for the extraordinary damage your sex inflicted on mine, it follows that women are occasionally superior to us. On the whole, things are much of a piece, I fancy.”

“ Who has done you ‘extraordinary damage’ ? ” she asked in a tone of great interest.

“ O, you daughter of Eve ! ” he answered, laughing, and added : “ Now I must find a lady for the cotillion. If I can’t, it will be on your conscience, for holding me spellbound.”

“ How light-hearted he is, talking, laughing, and joking ! ” thought Amelia to herself. “ Still Franz has his secret.”

Since the birth of Florestine’s son, the Lauingens’ cup of happiness was filled to overflowing.

“ Oswald, I have always to be thinking of Polycrates and his ring,” she said one day to her husband.

“ Pagan sentiments,” he answered. “ The gods may be envious of man’s happiness, but not God.”

After the birth of his grandson, to whom he stood godfather, Herr von Cronenstein made his will. In it he left his daughter his sole heiress, with the condition, however, that, in the event of a second son, he should succeed after her death to the Cronenstein property, and take the name of Cronenstein.

“ You make me so happy, dear father,” said Flor-

estine. "I shall be the mother, I hope, as well as the daughter, of a Cronenstein."

"Only take care you don't make little Lauingen jealous of little Cronenstein," said Oswald playfully.

On Florestine's return to the capital with her husband and child, she heard Telesphor's sad story from Franz.

"We must save him!" she exclaimed at once in her energetic way. "Let him be what he likes in the world as long as he doesn't lose his soul."

"Throw yourself into the water after the man who chooses to drown himself," said Franz.

"All the same we must try. Bring him here. I shan't be going out much this winter,—not to any balls—on account of the child, so we can have plenty of cosy evenings. To-morrow my father is coming with your mother; so it will be almost the same here as it used to be at Cronenstein. Only Oswald and Florestan are new, and they are a great addition and an immense gain to our party. If Telesphor can only once feel at home with us, he will soon get right and act reasonably."

"How can a man feel at home with you when he is forever behind the scenes with an actress?" asked Franz.

"Oh, it can't be as bad as that!" she answered, "and if it is, he may come right."

Telesphor's bondage grew more and more oppressive. He attended his lectures as seldom as possible, and wasted the time he spent away from Lisa Rink and the theatre in wretched attempts at writing a play. It was a talent he did not possess; he was

not made either to act himself or to write for actors. His passion robbed him of his judgment, and he was playing a false card for a false happiness.

Lisa Rink was no longer the poor little milliner, who had engaged herself to him she hardly knew why. Very different men now paid her attentions, opening out a glowing future, so that her own expectations were considerably raised. Retiring from the stage in four or five years' time just to marry Telesphor Herzog, seemed to her quite preposterous, and her vanity and worldliness made her discard the notion. But she knew that he loved her desperately, and she scarcely liked to break with him. He had loved her when poor and unknown, and if she fell back again into poverty and solitude, he would love her all the same. The knowledge tickled her vanity, so she let things go on as they might.

Telesphor felt only too keenly that he was playing a very poor part in the society which surrounded Lisa Rink. Pride urged him to get out of his obscurity by writing dramas. Rink, the manager, gave him the best advice as to the requisites for a good comedy, but advice did not enable him to write one.

"For goodness' sake, Herr Herzog, get down from your high horse when you want to write conversation," said Herr Rink. "Your talks are full of high-sounding heroics. Dreadfully stiff! If you *must* have heroics write tragedies, although the bombastic style is no longer popular even for tragedy. Everything now has to go on the level, smoothly, without effort. It's the fashion to appear in everyday clothes on the stage."

" You know, Herr Rink," answered Telesphor, " that I am writing for Lisa, and that tragedy is not her line."

" Let's leave Lisi alone, and you consult common sense. I've always heard that it's more difficult to write a good comedy than a good tragedy. We're agreed that your attempts at comedy so far haven't been successful. Well, then, I say try tragedy. Before you're ready, Lisi may perhaps venture on it, though I doubt whether her voice is powerful enough."

" She's so young that she hasn't come to her full powers. She ought to try a higher line; then she would appear on great stages."

" Nonsense!" interrupted the manager, up in arms for his theatre. " Actors can do quite as well for themselves on small stages. I'm the last person to want to see Lisi on a large stage, and shan't be in a hurry to advise her to one."

" I shall, then," said Telesphor coldly.

" What are you thinking of?" went on the manager; " what right have you to influence Lisi?"

" The right of her affianced husband, Herr Rink."

" Oh, stuff! Haven't you got that childish nonsense out of your head?" said the manager scornfully. " That was all very well when you were a student, but no man in his senses gives it a thought. If Lisi had remained at Y. as a milliner, the thing might have gone on, as far as I'm concerned, and have ended any way it liked. Then you suited each other; one had nothing, and the other a little. But from the

time that Lisi appeared on the stage, and made a noise, you're not the same people, and that's as sure as two and two make four."

"Lisi thinks differently," blurted out Telesphor, who hurried away to find her.

She was alone, to his great delight. She was sitting back in a deep arm-chair, learning a part by heart, which was lying on her lap, and playing meanwhile with a noisy gray parrot in a cage at her side. The room was very comfortably furnished, gay with fragrant flowers. The contrast between the miserable room at Y. with the two geranium pots in the window-sill was striking; between the quiet, shabby, industrious Lisi of those days, and the elegant Fräulein Lisa Rink, who busied herself languidly with the most startling fashion magazine, and made her light tasks still lighter by playing and lounging through them.

"Look, Telesphor!" she said, pleasantly shaking her roll of paper together.

"O Lisi, do you still love me?" he asked passionately.

"Oh, of course, only I should like you to call me Lisa, and to use you instead of *Du*," she answered, laughing.

"Before people, yes, but why when we are alone?" he asked touchily.

"Because I'm afraid you might forget yourself before people."

"And you're afraid of that?"

"Of course I am. I won't have people talking because I'm on the stage."

"They're more likely to talk about the idiots I see here only too often."

"Idiots!" said Lisa haughtily. "They're gentlemen of the best society, who admire my art, and artistes who honor it."

"Aren't both admiration and attentions for the artiste rather than for the art?"

"I can't draw these fine distinctions, because I'm perfectly indifferent in the matter," she said, stroking the parrot's head. "Admiration and attentions are part of an artiste's life, and so they are my due, and I must have them."

"But they may completely dry up all affection."

"Possibly. Up to the present they have not affected me in this way."

"O Lisi, how happy you are making me!"

Their talk was interrupted by the entrance of Frau Rink.

Telesphor lodged opposite. As he was going in at his door, he was met by Franz, who said heartily: "Now, I've caught you. I've been pacing the street for the last hour and a half, for just as I came up, I saw you disappear in a house over the way, and I was determined not to go back without carrying out my orders."

"Your orders? Will you come upstairs with me? or perhaps you had better say whatever it is here. You know I am up three stories," answered Telesphor, visibly put out.

"No, I will come with you. I'm half-frozen from my watch in the snow," answered Franz.

They had hardly reached Telesphor's room when

he said hastily, as if to get something disagreeable over, "Well, what about your orders?"

"Florestine sends her love, and wants you to come to a Cronenstein evening to-night. Her father and my mother arrived yesterday. She herself came with Lauingen a week ago, and brought her dear little boy with her. She's the same as ever, and will be delighted to see you."

"It'll hardly be possible to-day. I have a new bit of work on hand, that is, I've undertaken something . . ." said Telesphor, hesitating between impatience and vexation.

"I'm not going to be put off in this way," answered Franz, "for Flore wouldn't believe the excuse, and would fancy I had not asked you."

"I can't help it. Make her see that it's impossible."

"I can't do that, for I don't believe in your impossibility!" Franz answered laughing.

"Well, I can't go," answered Telesphor shortly.

"You are begged to come by your oldest and best friends, and you thrust them away," said Franz gently.

"I don't thrust them away—indeed not; but I'm no longer suited to them. I have different views and interests to those I once had."

"Perhaps it would do you a great deal of good to hear the familiar voices of your old friends."

"No, nothing does me good which brings back the past. You know my case——"

"Are you still full of that?" exclaimed Franz.

"Still full of that! You're trifling," said Teles-

phor drily. "I love Lisi, and the whole world is nothing to me."

"So I see," said Franz sadly. "But neither Florestine nor my uncle will understand it. They are full of heart, and for that very reason the world *is* something to them. But tell me what new bit of work you have on hand this evening."

"First I must go to the theatre, for Lisi is acting, and then I must write a comedy, for it's a promise to her . . . and I must get at it at once."

"Then will you come to Florestine to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes, to-morrow, by all means!" exclaimed Telesphor, only wishing to escape importunity.

No sooner was Telesphor alone than he sat down to his writing-table, meaning to sketch out a plot which he had vaguely in his mind. He could not put it into words so easily, nor give it shape and form. So the afternoon passed away to no purpose. As long as the plot was in his head it seemed good, but directly it was put on paper it was stilted and disconnected—a lifeless thing. Wearied out at last, he longed for the theatre to release him, though secretly vexed that he could not succeed, whereas formerly he had worked so vigorously and easily. He breathed again at the theatre. Lisa was acting. He saw and heard her, and forgot the rest, even the pain of his own broken life. The first piece was over, and as Lisa did not appear in the second, it had not the smallest charm for Telesphor. He left the theatre to go to her. He had hardly reached the door when he felt two pairs of arms laid upon him, and a

not unfamiliar voice said: "A prisoner by high commands! Quick, to the carriage!"

He had not time to wonder at being thus waylaid, for Oswald von Lauingen and Franz took him out between them to the carriage.

"These are Florestine's orders," said Lauingen. "She insists upon having you on our first cosy evening."

Telesphor yielded as graciously to his fate as he could. It would have been too unfriendly to resist these kind overtures. Florestine welcomed him as a friend of old times, she herself being just the same. Her father and aunt were also quite as friendly as ever. Florestine had endless questions about her dear Cronenstein.

"Teles," said Herr von Cronenstein, "have you heard what a great thing your father has just done for his native town? He has made over your grandmother's house, which Rabener has been occupying up to now, on easy terms, to the Pfarrer, who has used it for Vincent Guldman's purposes and placed teaching Sisters there, and they are going to open a small boarding-school. The ladies of X. are clamoring for something better than the elementary school, and good Fräulein Mäusel's lessons in science."

"What's become of Rabener, then?" asked Telesphor.

"The house was inconveniently situated for him. He had constantly before his eyes two reminders of the dark ages, St. Francis' Mount on the right and Cronenstein on the left. He didn't care for his neighbors, so he's bought the Webler house."

"*Bought* it? Is he getting on so well as that?"

"Capitally, it seems, for he even wanted to rent your father's small house for some relations of his, who desired setting up a school at X. But your father favored the Pfarrer's scheme, and the Sisters came into possession at the new year, though they had to encounter some opposition."

"And it's still going on," said Frau von Strahl, "for just before I came away I heard that the Medizinalrath and the Mayor would get the secular teachers to come—or at least one, and that she would easily find a livelihood."

"So X. is keeping pace with the century in having an opposition party," said Lauingen laughing.

"It's no laughing-matter," said Frau von Strahl. "It may embitter the poor Sisters' lives. This storm of worldliness against the Church is hateful."

"I fancy if a good spirit could possibly get to hell he would not be suffered there," said Florestine.

"Of course not," said her father. "The poor Sisters must be prepared for much friction. In our days it is inevitable."

"It seems so when even X. sets up its back against a clever community who are duly qualified to teach," said Lauingen. "They cannot be charged with either want of knowledge or incapacity. They do the work of secular teachers in their religious habit. That's their crime."

"Their teaching is too Catholic for certain people. Knowledge is not culture. A man with a vast amount of knowledge may be very uncultured in the highest sense."

"Yes," exclaimed Florestine, "it's essentially Catholic to think first and last of souls, therefore hateful to the heathenish spirit of the day. What sort of man is your brother-in-law, the Medizinalrath?" she asked abruptly, turning to Telesphor.

"My brother-in-law!" he said absently.

"Yes—Rabener, your brother-in-law. I mean, is he one of those doctors who look for the soul with the surgical knife, and because they don't find it deny the soul's existence—deny everything, in short?"

"I don't know whether he goes as far as all that," answered Telesphor.

"If he denies one thing he denies all," she said.

"The ancients believed in God and immortality, as well as in rewards and punishments after death. They had an Elysium and an Olympus, a Hades and a Tartar in their mythology," said Telesphor. "That was enough for them. They knew nothing of a redemption. What satisfied the refined, intellectual, and highly-cultured Greeks may well satisfy a particular man now."

"How do you know the Greek *was* satisfied with his religion?" asked Franz. "We know that Socrates was not satisfied with *his*, and so we may conclude that a Plato or a Sophocles would have opened wide their soul's eyes to the light of the Incarnation."

"Really, how can you name Rabener and Plato in the same breath!" exclaimed Telesphor. "Protagoras is more to the point. He said it was impossible to know whether the gods existed, and that for two reasons, first, the obscurity of the subject; and, second, the shortness of human life."

"But this saying of the old sage does not justify the supposition that he was contented with his want of conviction."

"All people who are so ready to deny God on hearing an unbelieving professor's lectures and after reading one or two anti-christian books, should take to heart Protagoras' wonderfully pertinent saying that human life was too short to prove God's existence," said Lauingen.

"That's so true that the Incarnation came to the rescue of human incapacity," said Frau von Strahl.

"I've very little intercourse with Dr. Rabener," said Herr von Cronenstein, "but it strikes me he's exactly the kind of man who is produced by a false culture. They make the history of the world begin with themselves."

"Look, Florette!" said Franz, laying a sheet of paper before her on which was a rough pencil sketch.

"Oh!" said Florestine, "here's the good spirit in hell." Franz had drawn a group of sad, hopeless figures, surrounded by serpents and monsters. They were gazing with despair at a soft-winged apparition, who hovered over them, bearing a lily.

"This is earth as well as hell," said Florestine, gravely.

"But what a thing it is to have a cousin with a ready pencil!" said Lauingen. "Flore gives utterance to a sentiment, and he makes it immortal."

"You'll come very often, won't you?" said Florestine to Telesphor as she wished him good-by.

"You're always welcome," said her father.

"If you won't come by fair means, you shall by

foul," added Lauingen heartily. "It has answered capitally."

Telesphor said yes to everything. It seemed to him he was himself one of the wretched spirits, gazing in despair at the heavenly apparition.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRAGEDY.

WITH spring Franz meant to go to Rome. He would then complete his three years' study at the Art Academy, and thought it time to set up independently in his profession. Frau von Strahl, therefore, dreaded spring.

"It means fresh blossoms," he said, "and perhaps this time they will be something quite special."

"They may still be cut off by frosts at night," she said sadly.

"My friends call me for fun Achilles the invulnerable," he said cheerily. "Your prayers, mother dear, are the Styx in which you must be always plunging me. I really ought to be able to get through a few of life's battles."

"Don't you suppose that poor Frau Herzog prays for her Teles as I pray for you, and yet look at him!"

"Think of St. Augustine, mother."

"My dear boy, it's the only wonder of its kind in eighteen centuries."

"But there are many St. Augustines in a small way. You certainly won't question the possibility of a man's becoming better and being converted."

"Of course not; it's what we have to do every day, for there's always something to improve and to con-

vert. Telesphor's conversion is not impossible, but only so difficult because he seems to me paralyzed, without interest in study, work, or the great battles which are being fought before our eyes for religion and truth. That was not St. Augustine's way, my boy. He did not give up everything at twenty-two, nor was he indifferent to the great questions of his day. In the midst of his pleasures he wrestled and struggled after the truth, and he passed his days learning and teaching in continual and close intellectual labor. Where this inward fire exists, it may burst into a heavenly flame, if properly fed. Is it so with Telesphor?"

"He always reminds me of the Scripture words, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, who didst rise in the morning.' "

"How seldom he comes to us—perhaps once in three weeks," she went on, "and what a way he has of talking! He never betrays himself, and one cannot imagine what is really in his mind. Did you remark the other day how much he made of Montaigne's saying, 'What do I know?'"

"The sorrowful look my uncle gave him went to my heart," said Franz.

"Hasn't that dreadful person sent him about his business yet? Amelia declares that Alfred Verden is in her good graces."

"Teles gets out of my way, and if we meet by accident he talks of the weather."

"Yes; anything to do with Cronenstein bores him—that's quite apparent. He no longer feels at home, either with his old friends or in good society, and it's

a dreadful calamity for a young man. What a warning for you, Franz!"

It was true indeed that Telesphor turned away from the friendly arms which would have piloted him safely across the angry waters. He cared nothing for friends, parents, or relations when compared to Lisa Rink. In the meantime her vanity, selfishness, and coquetry were making giant strides. Her whole life was a very hothouse for them. There was nothing in her to check them. She had no education, culture, common-sense, or religious principles where-with to resist their stormy influences. Her particular talent for comedy brought her in touch with a certain class of representations in which noble sentiments, great truths, and serious thoughts have no place. All she was concerned with in her parts was how to please, or rather, how to gain applause, and as she was very young, the parts which she acted became habits. If her coquettish ways on the stage charmed people, why should not the same thing be tried off the stage and with the same happy results? What was to prevent her? She made the attempt, naturally with the most brilliant success.

As the heart, so the man. Saints are made by love of God, sinners by the love of what is ignoble. Telesphor loved Lisa Rink, and one after the other his good points vanished. Her hand unstrung the cluster of pearls, which rolled into the dust. She did not forbid him to speak of love. Making conquests was part of her day's work. Why should he weary of adoring as long as she was not weary of being adored?

"What a nuisance that Herzog is!" said Frau Rink one day. "It annoys me to see him hanging about you without rhyme or reason."

"O, mother, don't be so ungrateful," answered Lisa carelessly. "He loved me in my poverty; why shouldn't he love me in my splendor?"

"Because *he's* not splendid," said Frau Rink, impatiently. "He's not a prince or an artist, or a journalist, nor even a smart lieutenant. He's nothing but a miserable student, who never gets on."

"Only wait till his comedy is ready, mother. Then, perhaps he will be as much applauded and noticed as I am."

"He's been an immense time at this comedy," grumbled Frau Rink. "I don't expect anything from it. It's certain to be a failure. If it should be, Lisi, you must send him about his business, you really must."

"Nobody *must* do anything, says somebody or other. There's no *must*, and I don't hold with the word, mother. I'm a human being, and not an automaton."

"It's beyond anything," said Frau Rink angrily. "Here are great people paying you attentions, a real prince, a royal highness, and you fritter yourself away on that blockhead, as if you were still the milliner on the third story."

"Mother," said Lisa, cutting her short, "I don't like sermons. I see the people I choose to see, and I'm not the least humbled if among them there happens to be somebody who knew me when I was poor Lisi. On the contrary, it's gratifying. It shows me

what a genius I am, and what wonders I've done in a year for myself, and you and my brothers. Do the boys go to school, and are they good at their lessons?"

"Philip talks of nothing but being an actor," replied Frau Rink in a scarcely audible tone, after being thus called to order by the bread-winner of the family.

"Stupid boy!" said Lisa ill-naturedly; "as if people could become actors as they become shoemakers and carpenters! Well, and what of Gabriel?"

"He's very good and industrious, but not very quick."

"Look, mother," said Lisa pacified. "One of your boys doesn't want to learn, and the other can't, so congratulate yourself that you have got Lisi, and don't weary her, for there's nothing she hates more than being bored. I have a feeling for Telesphor, and I won't throw him off. I'm not simple enough to think of marrying him, be sure of that."

The door opened and admitted Count Alfred Verden and another young man.

"Fräulein Lisa," he began, "I am bringing you some one who is going to the country of Venus, Hebe, the Muses, and the Graces. But as they are marble, he wishes first to make the acquaintance of Fräulein Lisa, who unites all their charms in her own person, with countless others. For instance, she's not made of lifeless stone. Allow me, therefore, the honor of introducing my friend and cousin, Herr von Strahl, a genius, and so an art relation of yours."

"What's your art?" asked Lisa, casting a somewhat surprised look at Franz, whose refined and dignified appearance formed a strong contrast to the men she was in the habit of seeing.

"I'm a sculptor," replied Franz.

"That must be a toilsome art! But you won't be going away before the races?" said Lisa.

"They are to be in the middle of June, aren't they?" asked Franz.

"Just listen to the miserable creature! He doesn't even know that they are to be in the middle of June," exclaimed Count Alfred. "Examine him about the race-horses and their owners; you'll find him densely ignorant."

"I'm immensely interested in these races," said Lisa.

"Are they your first?" asked Franz.

"Oh, no, I was at them last year; but now I know some men who are running horses, and how much they stake on them, and so I'm immensely keen about it."

"Angel of kindness!" said Count Alfred with rapture. "May I ask in whom your interest centres?"

"Why not? In Prince Xaver and his Morgenstern."

"That's very unjust, I consider, and to revenge myself, I must tell you that Prince Xaver's racer is not called Morgenstern, but Morning Star."

"As I don't understand English, Prince Xaver himself gave me this translation."

"Quite right. Still when you talk of Morgenstern,

no one suspects you of meaning Morning Star. If any one called you Fräulein Elizabeth, it would sound cold, stiff, distant. There's a charm about Fräulein Lisa. Much the same, though of course with an immense difference, may be said of Morning Star."

"Very well; I'll remember what you say. I'm ready to learn," said Lisa, turning to Franz to ask if he frequented the theatre as he was bound.

"I very seldom go," he said. "I've very little time."

"What a privation!" she said compassionately. Then to Count Alfred: "How did you like my acting the day before yesterday at the Court Theatre?"

"I pity the unfortunate woman who attempts to rival you!"

"It seemed to me that I acted the part very simply and naturally."

"Indeed you did, Fräulein Lisa! Your charming naïveté is inimitable."

"My uncle sometimes advises me to go an immense deal to the theatre to study other actors, so as not to get into a groove. But I find a great deal more to blame than to praise, and nothing to learn, as I follow my inward bent in acting, and that's not helped by other people's interpretation."

"Only keep to your own way. You are perfect in it, and perfection prevents one-sidedness."

"Do you think so too?" asked Lisa of Franz.

"It's not always true," he answered; "indeed, there are curious instances to the contrary."

"I should like to hear them," exclaimed Alfred.

“ Two or three generations ago the celebrated cat painter, Mint, lived at Bern. He painted cats and children in thousands of ways and attitudes and groups, with so much freshness and life and naturalness that it was impossible to look at his pictures without pleasure, and not to admire his talent. But it was his particular line, and it was confined to children and cats. It did not go beyond them, nor his interest either. He was so wanting in understanding for anything else that people called him half daft. For all that his groups of children and cats are unrivalled.”

“ That’s certainly a very one-sided excellence,” laughed Lisa.

“ And an extraordinary destiny! To have the single faculty of painting cats!” exclaimed Count Alfred.

“ Don’t forget the general rehearsal, Lisa. It will soon be time,” said Frau Rink, who never took part in the conversation, but sat with her work at the window, and saw each visitor from a discreet distance.

“ I wish you a pleasant journey to the marble statues,” said Lisa somewhat spitefully to Franz, as she rose in obedience to her mother’s warning.

When the two young men were on the street, Alfred burst out: “ It will always be a mystery to me why you called upon Lisa Rink. You had not a word of admiration for her, nor a word about any of her parts. You told her about a stupid cat-painter. If I had suspected what you were going to do, I should never have introduced you to her, for really you do

me no credit. What could you want with her at all?"

"Just to see what she is really like."

"Without any *arrière pensée*?"

"I wanted to know whether she really was the great genius people pretend that she is."

"Well, and what's your conclusion?"

"They may be right as far as the stage is concerned. I have seen her only twice, and that's not enough for a thorough opinion. Within her own four walls she strikes me as a very pretty, vapid and vain little person, just about equal to entertain men who are as empty and *blasé* as Prince Xaver."

"You're a polar bear, making Lisa Rink the subject of psychological studies," said Alfred.

"Well, you know I belong to the polar bear tribe," said Franz quietly, and leaving Alfred he went up the street again, and called on Telesphor.

"Oh, congratulate me," exclaimed the latter to him. "I've finished my play."

"The work seems to have cost you trouble. You look tired, and I don't fancy your medicine," answered Franz, pointing to two empty champagne bottles.

"During the day I was not inclined to write, and had other things to do, but night and champagne stirred me up, and put me into a writing mood. I hope the piece will come on next, and if it takes, I shall continue at the business."

"Is it a clever comedy, after the fashion of 'Donna Diana' for instance?" asked Franz.

"Oh, no, not at all! It's a comedy in every-day dress, as Rink expresses it, which is what people like."

"But supposing it should *not* take, what then?"

"Lissa plays the principal part, so it *must* take."

"Now, show yourself at Florestine's, Teles, as you have got through your work. We've only a short time to be together, for I am going to Rome, and who knows how and when we may meet again—if we ever do meet."

"Oh, yes, I'll come. Give them all my best love, but now I must go with my manuscript to Rink."

Franz observed with sorrow that Telesphor's whole mind was turned away from his old friends, and the feeling came upon him that their paths were cast forever apart.

"Is your opus ready at last?" said Herr Rink as Telesphor put the manuscript into his hand. "If the proverb 'slow and sure' be true, you are bringing me something first-rate."

He turned it over with the practised hand of experience, whilst Telesphor expressed various wishes about the piece and its being speedily put on the stage. The manager interrupted him occasionally with a remark: "No sustained dialogue! . . . Humph, not bad! . . . scene drags . . . Too coarse! No, it won't do," he said suddenly, quite harshly. "I've told you that comedy should appear in everyday clothes, but I never said in shirt-sleeves."

"I will make any alterations you think necessary," answered Telesphor. "I trust to you, not having personal experience of the stage."

"The whole thing seems to me a labored composition, not a happy inspiration. Well, we'll see what can be done with it." He kept it for several

days, went over it fully, made various changes, but shook his head over them, and said irritably : " Give it up, my dear fellow. The thing's a cripple and remains a cripple. It will never be able to trip gayly across the stage."

" You won't allow me the satisfaction of having written a good part for Lisa," burst out Telesphor.

They both grew warm, and the manager stormed in upon Lisa.

" It's high time for you to shake off your admirer, my dear," he said to her in a rage.

" Which of them ?" asked Lisa carelessly.

" Which of them ? Why, that Herzog, of course ! "

" What's he done, uncle ? "

" He has written a comedy."

" Oh, is it ready at last ? He always said it wanted finishing off ! I'm so pleased," and she clapped her hands for joy.

" You may spare yourself your elation, my dear. Yes, it's ready, and finished off as much as it can be. But the thing's a fine mess, stupid and coarse to a degree that people won't stand. At least they might put up with the coarseness, but not with the stupidity."

" Never mind, uncle. If *I* play people are always enchanted."

" I tell you the composition's not worth the trouble of copying out the parts. It will be a *fiasco*, and you, too."

" *I* a *fiasco* !" shouted Lisa, springing up, as a venomous serpent might. " What nonsense, uncle !

I tell you now positively that the piece must be studied and brought on without delay. If it isn't, I shall play my parts on a new stage this summer, and then you'll see what this theatre is without me."

"Bother these obstinate women!" grumbled the manager.

"That's all right, uncle. If we hadn't a little bit of self-will, what protection should we have against the tyranny of the stronger sex?" asked Lisa laughing.

"Stronger sex, indeed!" said Herr Rink crossly; "I see nothing strong about it. I am a goose, and have never yet learned how to treat with actresses."

"Uncle!" she said, in a threatening tone.

"It's the truth, Lisi. I risk my reputation as a manager in allowing that piece to appear."

"I don't care if you do, uncle. You know my wish."

And she had her way. The piece was not only most carefully rehearsed ; it was also announced in very laudatory terms as the first production of a young genius. Lisa's vanity left nothing unturned to make it a success through her acting. The theatre critics praised without knowing, in order to please the reigning actress. Their commendations took effect. The play-going world was on the tip-toe of expectation to see the wonderful piece which an unknown author had written solely and entirely for Lisa Rink. One said he was the young son of a duke, another that Lisa was engaged to a country pastor, and that he had

composed the play. Before the day fixed for the first performance came, Franz had left for Italy, and his mother and uncle for Cronenstein. Telesphor had hardly made time to wish them good-by. Count von Lauingen was staying in town for the last sitting before going to Seeheim. He too had heard an immense deal about the new comedy, and as Florestine, contrary to her wont, also expressed great interest in the matter, he took a box ; people had to engage these weeks before the performance. Florestine heard the author's name from Franz, but she awaited the result before disclosing it.

In her way, Amelia Verden was quite as enthusiastic an admirer of Lisa Rink as her brother-in-law Alfred ; she viewed as real and not affected the simple parts which Lisa played excellently well.

“Isn't it dear and quite Arcadian of the innocent creature to be engaged to a country clergyman ?” she said to Florestine, as they were talking of the play. Lauingen burst out laughing and replied :

“Don't deceive yourself, Amelia. An idyll with Prince Xaver seems to me far more likely.”

“That's what I'm always telling my wife,” said Count Verden, “but in vain. She won't distinguish between art and nature in the actress.”

“You are both against the bewitching creature,” exclaimed Amelia.

“Not at all,” answered her husband. “I think her charming on the stage, but it seems to me somewhat bold to carry her passion for admiration and her vanity into her private life.”

Of course Amelia did not give up her views.

She was one of those who could not exist without a craze of some kind.

The evening of the performance came at last. Lauingen with his wife and mother, Amelia with her husband and brother-in-law, were sitting expectantly in their box. The house, not a large one, was crowded, and the heat stifling.

"What pleasure for a June evening," said Florestine to her husband.

"It was your wish, my dear child."

"Of course it was," she laughed. "The spell has drawn me as well as others."

But her heart was heavy. The Telesphor of early days came before her, and she thought of the May evening under the budding limes, when he had said enthusiastically that theology was his whole life, and that he longed to preach the eternal truth to thousands of souls.

The curtain drew up and the play began. It was the production of a pen without talent and of a brain goaded on by stimulants; it was wearisome and wanton from beginning to end. Lisa appeared in the third scene. She was greeted with loud applause, which diminished during the scene itself, and only began again as she left the stage, a clear sign that it was given solely to her. After the first act her supporters tried to rouse some enthusiasm, but the public remained cold.

"It's really a shame to have come to such a piece," said Countess Lauingen, Oswald's mother.

"Who could have expected it from a simple country clergyman?" said Oswald, laughing, to Amelia.

"I can't understand Lisa's taking such a part," said Amelia.

"Still she's an angel, and always will be one," said Alfred emphatically.

"Even after the failure of the piece?" said his brother.

Florestine's heart was too heavy for talking. The second act was worse than the first. The intrigue was spun out to a more wearisome extent, and the complications and jokes were coarser to make up for it. Deep silence greeted its close, and the faint applause elicited by Lisa's friends was drowned by vigorous hissing.

Florestine could bear it no longer. "Dear Oswald," she said, pale and trembling, to her husband, "do take me away. I am suffocating in this heat."

Lauingen saw her out and into the carriage, and then returned to the box. The third and last act began, and at its close furious hisses, cries, and stamping showed the feeling of the audience. Lauingen with Count and Countess Verden drove back to Florestine. Alfred hurried to Lisa.

"What a wretched apology for pleasure," sighed Amelia in the carriage.

"How could they announce this miserable production as a work of art?" said Verden impatiently.

"What must be the author's feelings, whoever he may be?" said Lauingen.

They found Florestine and her mother-in-law sitting quietly at the tea-table.

"I'm convinced that all these plays, be they what they may, produce a certain imbecility in people,"

said Count Verden. "People who give their eyes and ears to stage figures for three or four hours a day must grow weak in intellect."

"That's a bad lookout for us who go so often to the theatre," said Amelia to Countess Lauingen.

"Strong minds are an exception, aren't they, Amelia?" replied the latter laughing. "But Count Verden's not altogether wrong."

"Still the theatre is universally supposed to be an education," remarked Amelia.

"The very word 'education' is a party phrase nowadays," answered her husband. "We must not receive it before we are quite clear what is meant. Put yourself a question, Amelia, before you become the apologist of the stage. Would you like to see your own sons what Alfred is? Hardly, I think. And how does he get his information? From the theatre and all that the theatre teaches."

The door opened and Alfred himself walked in, scarcely able to contain his excitement.

"Here you all are, sitting quietly, having your tea and your ices, whilst I have been witnessing a dreadful scene—a wholly unexpected scene," he exclaimed.

"Calm down, and then tell us all about the murder and blood-shedding," said Oswald, handing him an ice.

"It's worse," answered Alfred.

"Not a revolution?" asked Countess Lauingen, turning pale.

"Or a great fire?"

"Has the theatre given way?

"Or have the heavens collapsed?" asked Count Verden, satirically.

"You've nearly hit it," answered Alfred.

"The heavens collapsing! What nonsense!" said Amelia.

"But, my dear Count, who has suffered from this catastrophe?" asked Florestine, her thoughts busy with Telesphor.

"I have, Countess Flore," answered Alfred, turning their suspense into laughter by helping himself to a second ice. "And I appeal to you, for you will understand me best."

"This is getting interesting," exclaimed Oswald, whilst Florestine, still thinking of Telesphor, listened with painful anxiety.

"Isn't the destruction of our ideals a collapse of the heavens? Well, I've seen it with my own eyes, for I've seen an angel changed into a fury! When the curtain had fallen on that wretched production I hastened to Lisa Rink, and found her most dreadfully angry, I might almost say, raging. She could scarcely contain herself. She was stamping and exclaiming, 'The wretch, the simpleton! He has disgraced me! I'll never see him again. I hate and detest him.' So she went on. I suggested that the hissing had not been meant for her. 'Silence!' she answered, angrily. 'I know that, but when I am on the stage, I expect peace and quiet at least.' Her old uncle, the manager, said coolly: 'The whole thing's your own fault, Lizzie! Why didn't you listen to my experience? Why did you encourage the wretched thing?' 'I did it out of com-

passion,' exclaimed Lisa, ' and this disgrace is my reward.' I tried to soothe her, but she held her ears with both her hands and screamed out, ' Hold your tongue, will you? Your foolish remarks can't deaden the shouts which are still in my ears.' You can understand, Countess Flore, what an effect it all produced on me. I answered that I would never trouble her again with my 'foolish remarks.' She said, 'I shall be very glad of it,' and turned her back upon me. So the heavens have collapsed,—my heavens, I mean, and I must try to recover my senses."

" Alfred, you ought to be ashamed of mentioning these follies before ladies," said Count Verden impatiently, "but of course a man doesn't learn wisdom and tact from angels who become furieⁿ behind the scenes."

They parted for the evening. When Florestine was alone with her husband, she could no longer keep back her tears.

" Oswald, Telesphor Herzog wrote this dreadful play," she said to him. " What can we do to make him alter his ways?"

" Nothing whatever," answered Lauingen, greatly surprised by the news.

" Oh, don't say that!" she exclaimed. " If we don't think of him now, who will?"

" You know how pleased I am to do as you wish, Florette,—but I own I've no desire to seek out this student or writer or whatever he is. He has shown us plainly enough that he didn't feel at home in our house. But if he's really the author of that piece, I can understand his constraint with us, and of course he can't care for our society."

"Before Franz left he told me that Teles had written a play, but that he wouldn't show it to him and didn't want it to be known as his for the present."

"I should think not, and I hope it never may be. Cheer up, Flore—perhaps the failure may bring him to his senses."

Florestine could not rest satisfied with this very faint hope. She wrote a short note, and posted it the following morning early on her way to Mass. It was to Telesphor's father.

CHAPTER IX.

THUNDER CLOUDS.

TELESPHOR was humbled to the dust. On the momentous evening he had left the theatre before the end of the piece, but not too soon to realize his failure. He passed a night of feverish misery, eating out his heart. Herr Rink appeared the following morning and told him harshly that all was now over between Lisa and himself. She regretted her kindness to him, and hoped he would keep away in future, for she had quite made up her mind not to see him.

"I told you exactly how it would be," added Herr Rink. "I told you that you are not suited to Lisi, and also that your play was worth nothing. I've some experience, but you would not listen to reason. They say the man who won't take advice must buy his own experience. Now you know what it is to have had two enormous delusions. I hope they may be a good warning to you."

"So do I," answered Telesphor, with a harsh and bitter laugh, as he saw Herr Rink to the door.

His heart was dead within him. He had sacrificed his all to an idol who was absolutely insensible to him. Incapable of any resolution, he stood at his window, watching to see who called upon Lisa. He

was unwilling to leave for a single minute a post which he deemed so important. The champagne, to which he helped himself freely, kept up the unnatural excitement.

Lisa had been staying in the house for three days. She was said to be ill with vexation at the inconsiderate behavior of the public, and, to punish it, she intended to disappear for some time. On the evening of the third day she went out in a carriage with her mother. Telesphor thought she was taking a drive, and left his post for half-an-hour, so that he missed seeing another carriage, which followed shortly afterwards, and fetched the lady's maid, and a considerable amount of luggage. But when after two or three hours Lisa did not return, and there was no light in her windows, he was in great dismay. He would have burst into her house to ask where she was, but intense agitation nailed him to the spot. He dreaded hearing that she had gone. He waited and waited. Carriage after carriage passed the door, and rolled down the street, and each time his heart beat high with expectation, and then sank within him. At length, however, the carriages stopped; only a few people overtaken by the hour hurried along here and there, and soon they, too, disappeared. The dead hours of the night in a large town are appalling: all is at rest except sin and sorrow. The old religious houses, who bade their inmates consecrate the hours following midnight to prayer, fully recognized this. They sought to avert the miasma of sin by the incense of supplication. The hours passed away; the gaslight grew pale and

weird in the dawn, gray as it was, of the summer morning. Telesphor fell back into an arm-chair, and sank into a dead sleep. It was broad daylight when he awoke, and his father was standing before him.

"Teles!" said old Herzog, putting out his hand with a sad smile. "I have come to take you away. It will be two years in August since you were last with us, and you write very seldom—not a word in six months! Your mother is longing for you, and she is weak and poorly. Then I heard that you were not well either, so I started off and am come to take you back with me. Pack up your things, and I will help you."

Telesphor recovered his wits whilst his father was speaking.

"Thank you, father," he said, outwardly calm. "You must forgive me for my negligence in not writing. As soon as the holidays begin, I will come to X., but now in the midst of the lectures, it's impossible."

"I know that you've not been to any lectures for many a day. I know everything, Teles," said the old man with deep feeling. "I don't reproach you, but I've come to take you home—lest the devil should have it all his own way," he added in his old tone.

"What a state your things are in, and how bad you look yourself!" went on old Herzog, as he glanced round the room. "No man with a well-regulated mind could stand such disorder! Now then, get up and dress yourself, and in the meantime I will be packing up your things. Where's

your box ? You may leave the books and papers here, they are not worth much anyhow ! Then we'll go to an inn and breakfast and then start for X."

Telesphor obeyed his father mechanically. Lisi was gone ; what was there to keep him in town ? But where was she ?

Herzog went to settle matters with the landlord, and Telesphor took the opportunity of rushing across to Lisa's house.

" I find Fräulein Rink's apartments shut up," he said to the porter. " What does it mean ? "

" That she's gone away—where, I can't say. It was a sudden move. Prince Xaver was a great deal with her before she started."

" And what of her mother and brothers ? " asked Telesphor, with his heart in his mouth.

" Frau Rink has gone, too, but the two boys have been at the *Schalkische Institut* for six weeks. Have you forgotten that, Herr Herzog ? "

" Thank you," said Telesphor in a scarcely audible tone, and he found his way back again. For a long time past he had not given a thought to Lisa's brothers, although their Catholic education had been in his mind when he followed Lisa to the capital. Now they had been for six weeks at an anti-christian college, and he knew nothing about it, so little had he troubled himself on the boys' account. But his negligence on that score did not affect him very deeply. Lisa had gone, and Prince Xaver was, so it seemed, at the bottom of it.

Whilst Florestine's faithful kindness had summoned old Herzog to the rescue of his son, a telegram

from Frau von Strahl apprised her of her father's severe illness. In terrible anxiety as to whether she should find him alive she started off for Cronenstein with her husband and boy. He was still living and even somewhat better. Florestine made up her mind to stay on, whether Lauingen were called away or not.

No sooner had old Herzog heard of Herr von Cronenstein's illness and Florestine's visit than he went up to the Castle to see her. Florestine was quite shocked at his altered appearance, so bent and worn did the old man look. That very evening he had an apoplectic seizure, which, however, did not at once prove fatal. He was able to receive the last sacraments ; then he became unconscious, and died in a few hours.

Afra was summoned to her father's funeral. Many years had passed since they had all been together, and Telesphor was not at ease with them. He realized the perfect freedom and independence which his father's death would bring to himself, and the consciousness gave him a certain satisfaction. When questioned by his family as to what he should do in the future, he always put forward his medical studies. There was only one drawback, the time they required.

Herzog's will was read the day after the funeral. It announced that the firm of Kühn would immediately buy the whole business for a stipulated sum, and carry it on without further trouble to the heirs. The requisite documents were all at hand, and so the division was effected without the slightest difficulty.

Telesphor held aloof from all the succession business, saying only that he wished to have his share paid to him in money. His mother was concerned at it.

"Leave it in the business, Teles," she said. "Kühn gives us the option, and the firm is as safe as our own. What do you want to do with your capital? Not to put it in Government securities, surely, or to buy some outlandish shares or other?"

"I shall deposit it in a bank at the place where I am, so as to have it at hand," answered Telesphor, who was only concerned to put himself beyond the least control from his family. He had chiefly in view a reconciliation with Lisa Rink. Life at X. seemed a meagre, humdrum affair after the intense excitement of the last few years. His state of mind and feeling made him a perfect alien in the family circle. Rabener was the only person he could at all tolerate, for Rabener talked of Lisa Rink, and delighted Telesphor by sympathizing entirely with his admiration for the girl.

"Only it shouldn't go so far as to make you hate all work," he said, as Telesphor owned he had lost his taste for serious study. "Take up literature if science seems too dry. You might write historical articles and enlighten the world. What a pity it was you failed in writing for the stage. An immense deal can be done there for new lights."

"How did you know I had tried? I wrote anonymously. Only Lisa and her uncle and Franz were in the secret."

"I heard it from friends in town. Everything gets out. I can also tell you where Lisa Rink is."

"I know where she is. The papers said she had gone to Paris to study her art."

"She's now in Switzerland, where she has met Prince Xaver."

Telesphor turned pale. Rabener went on: "You are an idiot to take the whole thing so much to heart. The fair sex is not worth it."

"You don't know Lisa!" said Telesphor.

"But I know many like her," answered Rabener, "and I know what I'm saying. It's folly to spend thoughts, feelings, time, strength, money, or whatever else it may be, in an absorbing passion for *one* woman when the world abounds in charming women."

"I don't think so," answered Telesphor.

"Because you don't look about you. You're forever wrapped up in yourself, with the thought of Lisa Rink, and she has long ago forgotten all about you."

"I can't believe that. She said it in a passion and didn't mean it. As soon as things are settled here, I'm going after her."

"For my part I say that you must be cured by time and experience. It would be wiser to stay here. It would be a very good thing for X. to have a newspaper on the side of modern progress and culture. Working for poor stupid humanity at X. would give you an interest in life."

Florestine passed her days in her father's sick room. Oswald was not half so ready in writing to her as she to him, and she longed for him to come. She meant to go with him and Florestan on a pilgrimage to Maria Waldrast. Oswald returned on his little boy's first birthday, and was most affec-

tionate to mother and child. Still Florestine observed with some anxiety that he had no wish to make the pilgrimage.

"I can only stay three days," he said, "so let us keep quietly with your father, Florette."

She agreed cheerfully, merely remarking, "Three days are nothing. Why are you so hurried?"

"I must go to Seeheim from here. There's a new threshing-machine, a very dear article, and I want to see how it works. In three or four weeks' time I shall be back again for longer, and will help you in nursing your dear father. What does the doctor say about him?"

"He gives no hope of cure. He may last as long as his strength holds out, but it may go to his heart any day."

Oswald left again in three days. Florestine was a good housekeeper, and had a full account sent to her every fortnight from Seeheim. It came three days after Oswald's departure, but it did not speak of his arrival there. In the meantime he wrote from town. The letter contained not a syllable about Seeheim or the threshing-machine. "How very odd," thought Florestine to herself. "He tells me of things, and says nothing about them in his letters." She scarcely heard anything of him.

Herr von Cronenstein's decline was very gradual, yet none the less sure.

"Having you with him, gnädige Gräfin,* is prolonging his life," Dr. Hellmut would say. "He rests upon you, and then he is helped by his peace of mind and resignation to God's will—and of course by

* Gracious Countess.

the capital nursing. A troubled mind would have worn out the body long ago."

Florestine felt that the doctor was right, and could not dream of leaving her father. Only in every letter to her husband she besought him to come and to stay as long as possible. Four weeks passed away, and still he did not return. Then in a few hurried lines he told Florestine to expect him in a week. She read the letter with fear at her heart, saying to Frau von Strahl : "What can have happened to Oswald ?"

"Nothing, Flore dear. Serious matters are before the House, and he is on the commission. For goodness' sake don't set yourself against your husband's taking an interest in public matters. Young married women who want to keep their husbands always at their side, are extremely ill-advised. It leads to perpetual worry."

Florestine was silent ; she did not deserve the reproof. Oswald again put her off for a week, and her anxiety increased. At last he came back, overflowing with kindness, so that, as Frau von Strahl remarked, "he seemed more bridegroom than husband."

Florestine's love sharpened her perceptions, and very soon she noticed a change in Oswald. He was absent, excitable, and somewhat irritable. After a week at Cronenstein, he suddenly declared that he must go to the capital for three days.

"I thought the House had adjourned," said Florestine, turning pale.

"So it has. It's my own business."

"Nothing disagreeable, Oswald?"

"Certain things are never pleasant," he said with a slightly forced laugh.

"You won't attempt any speculation on the *Börse*, will you?"

"Certainly not," he exclaimed with decision. "Speculation isn't my line. I've always found spending money much easier than speculating with it."

Florestine was aware of his propensity for spending, which she had often tried to keep within bounds, so she answered cheerily: "You must get on without your lady treasurer this time."

"But it's not money business, Florette. and I shall be back again in three days."

And so he was. He was quite himself and in very good spirits. Florestine had no cause for anxiety, and secretly reproached herself for having felt it. But her peace of mind did not last.

"Florette," Oswald said to her one evening with a touch of constraint, "I must go to Seeheim to-morrow morning early, but I shall be back the day after to-morrow in the evening."

"I'm very glad to hear it," she answered warmly. "I shall go with you to Seeheim. I've not been there for nine months, and I should like to have a look at our property and people."

"Can you make up your mind to leave your father?" asked Oswald, visibly annoyed.

"Providence will watch over him, and I may hope there will be no change for the worse in these thirty-six hours," she said.

Oswald did not answer. Dr. Hellmut used to come every evening. As he left the sick room with

Florestine, he was met by Oswald, who took them both into the drawing-room, where Frau von Strahl was sitting at a great piece of embroidery.

" You must decide a question, Dr. Hellmut," he said. " I have to go to Seeheim to-morrow. I can get there in eight hours with extra horses, and I shall come back the following day in the same way, so it's rather a stiff journey. My wife wants to go with me to make sure that Seeheim is as usual. Now, wouldn't it be more sensible if she stayed here quietly with her father ? "

" Yes, it would," said Dr. Hellmut, and Frau von Strahl upheld him in his opinion.

Florestine was sensible of one thing only,—that Oswald did not want her. She seated herself at the embroidery frame, and worked away to hide her tears. When she was alone with her husband later, she said: " Oswald, you're not going to Seeheim now, any more than you were two months ago. Where are you going ? You are keeping something back from me, and making me very unhappy."

She looked at him as she spoke, with her true and loving eyes.

" Dear, sweet Flore," he said tenderly, " don't vex yourself so. As you press me, I will tell you that I'm going to town. I went straight there two months ago. I told you I had business there. Even when the House is not sitting, a multitude of things claim my attention. Make yourself happy. If you don't see me in thirty-six hours, you will in three days."

At the end of three weeks he was still away.

CHAPTER X.

THE HERMIT OF SANT' ISIDORO.

TELESPHOR had left X. as soon as his father's affairs were settled and he had received his portion. Straight as the arrow from the bow, he set out after Lisa. She was not in town, and no one knew when she would be coming back. Telesphor was convinced that no information would be supplied by the manager, so he went off to Switzerland, studied the visitors' books, and soon found what he wanted. She had been everywhere; on the Lake of Zürich, the Lake of Lucerne, up the Rigi at Bern, in the Bern Oberland, but not recently. He could not trace her further than Grindelwald. There was no mention of her at Meiringen. She would hardly have passed without staying to see the Reichenbach Falls or Aarfall in the neighborhood of Handeck. It was a wearisome day's journey through the wild mountain scenery, climbing up a small and rough path, whilst far below them the Aar thundered along in its solemn bed of rock. If the traveller is fortunate enough to reach the Handeckfall as the sun is shining a rainbow over the abyss of surging waters, the majestic peace of the picture dominates the chaos all around, and the tumult in his own soul, if there be

one. Telesphor had neither eyes nor ears for all this. He would hardly stop at the waterfall, and spurred on the astonished guide, who had never before witnessed so much indifference. After a heavy climb of nine hours, they reached the hotel on the Grimsel, the so-called hospice. Telesphor seized the visitors' book : it did not contain Lisa Rink's name.

"We must turn back at once by the same way," he exclaimed to the guide, moving to go.

"No, sir, it's quite impossible," answered the man quietly, not budging from his seat, and looking wistfully at the goat-cheese and black bread.

"But we must go ! I'll double and treble your *trinkgeld*."

"If you gave me ten times the amount, it's impossible. There's no going from Grimsel to Meiringen by night. The path's dangerous after dark."

"Then I shall go alone," said Telesphor, grasping his Alpine stick.

"No, sir, don't attempt it. If you fall into the Aar, you'll never get back to Meiringen. To-morrow you can manage it comfortably."

It was blowing up for a storm and Telesphor was obliged to listen to guide and landlord. When he stood at the door the storm region lay at his feet, and lightning darted up at him from below. What did he care about it ? Where was Lisa ? Did she love Prince Xaver ? His thoughts beat into his brain as if they had been so many strokes from a hammer.

With the first streaks of dawn on the following morning he set out to return to Meiringen. Arrived there he was just thinking whether he should go on

to the Lake of Brienz or return to Grindelwald, when the guide touched him, saying, "Look, sir. Those curious English people are riding towards us."

"Why, they're Bern mountaineers," he answered, giving them a rapid glance.

"As much as you are a Bern mountaineer, sir. It's a silly fancy of the lady's to dress as one."

She presented a strange appearance on horseback, dressed in a dark robe edged with red, loose white sleeves, and a flat straw hat with a bunch of roses. Telesphor gazed and gazed and stood rooted to the spot. It was Lisa Rink, and the man who rode beside her in a brown velvet jacket and a wide straw hat was Prince Xaver. Telesphor's whole being was in a wild tumult, but as she rode up he planted himself in front of her and would have stopped her horse. For a moment she was startled, then recognizing him, she held up her whip, exclaiming angrily, "Get out of my way," and rode on. As for Telesphor, all the blood rushed to his heart, and he turned deadly pale. His white face frightened the guide, who put it down to the unwonted fatigue of mountain-climbing. On reaching the hotel, Telesphor went to his room, spiritless and broken-hearted. His brain was on fire, and he was smarting with humiliation and anger. This was the being he had loved—*how* he had loved her! He saw his whole life in mental vision, what he had once been and what he now was. Yet his pride would not own that a Lisa Rink had lured him away from his vocation.

"It was not my vocation," he said to himself, "that is why I gave it up."

What was he to do? He had lost all taste and interest in everything which was not Lisa. Suddenly he remembered a letter which Rabener had given him for a professor of the Zürich University. Lisa had put both letter and professor out of his head when he had been at Zürich on a former occasion.

He had scarcely reached Zürich and delivered his letter when his overwrought strength and nerves gave way, and he became seriously ill.

Lisa Rink was extremely annoyed at meeting Telesphor, for he reminded her of failure. Rosenlani, the prettiest of all Swiss glaciers, found no favor in her eyes. Meiringen bored her, so did Switzerland itself. She was bent on a tour in Italy, and Prince Xaver was only too delighted to second her wishes. Lisa sought out her mother's wing once more, to prepare her for the Italian expedition. Frau Rink was used to being a mere companion to her daughter, whom she venerated as a sort of princess.

They set out, but the journey fell far short of Lisa's expectations. She had no taste for nature, no understanding for the creations of art, and absolutely no knowledge of history. To her Italy was as a huge panorama of dissolving views. She was always for moving on.

Rome was reached at last. Possibly Rome might not have found favor in her eyes, for its monuments and galleries, its sculpture and ruins and holy places have one drawback: they court nothing, nobody, but require to be themselves courted. However the

fancy took her to act the quasi-princess, and to patronize some artist or other. She told Prince Xaver that a relation of Count Alfred Verden's, a certain Herr von Strahl, was living in Rome, and would, of course, be highly flattered by a visit from Prince Xaver and Lisa Rink. They must find him out.

It was easily done. His studio was at the top of the Pincio, in a retired quarter near Sant' Isidoro, which is the church and convent of the Irish Franciscans. It was on the ground floor, looking on to the trees of Sant' Isidoro. The door opened straight into the street. When Lisa and the Prince reached it, it stood open to the refreshing October air, and Franz was modeling a clay bust, too intent on his work to be disturbed by the sound of carriage-wheels at his door. He was effectually roused by hearing a man's voice saying, "Does the German sculptor live here?"

"Probably they want to see the studio of the famous German master Achtermann," he said to the servant, who was standing at the door. "It's quite close here on the Piazza Barberini near the Capuchins."

"It's you we want, Herr von Strahl, for you really are a countryman of ours," exclaimed Lisa Rink, and Franz discovered who was sitting in the carriage. He recognized Prince Xaver at once and would have addressed him with his full title.

"Don't, please," interrupted the Prince. "I'm here in strict incognito and call myself Count Clotar. We're come to admire your masterpieces."

'I must repeat that you've come to the wrong

door," answered Franz, laughing. " You'll find masterpieces at Achtermann's. I'm only a student."

" Never mind. It's you we want," replied Lisa, impatiently. " I've already seen a dreadful quantity of masterpieces in Rome."

She rustled in, raising a cloud of dust, looked all round, and exclaimed laughing : " Heads, arms, feet, and hands ! Why, it's a regular battle-field ! "

" They're only studies," answered Franz.

" But where are your marble things ?" asked Lisa.

" In my head," he laughed.

" But you must have produced something of some kind ?"

" Yes, I have—only not in marble."

He showed them various casts : a St. John the Baptist as a child, a penitent Magdalen, Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice, Cain with Abel's corpse.

" That's all fearfully grave," said Lisa, not in the least understanding what she saw, and not knowing what she ought to say.

" But it's fine, very fine—wonderfully fine," said Prince Xaver, not knowing either, and still wishing to be polite.

" Look at the four horses, there, Count. They're not the least like Morning Star," remarked Lisa.

" War, Famine, Plague, and Death don't race on the turf, and consequently don't use full-blooded English horses," said Franz seriously, though he was secretly much amused.

" That's true," said Lisa in a tone of conviction,

and her eyes wandered round the room. Suddenly she exclaimed, "Ah, I can spy out a woman's head there. It's very pretty. Who is it there with a crown?"

"Melpomene," answered Franz.

"But what's her name in German? I don't understand foreign languages," she exclaimed impatiently.

"The Muse of Tragedy," he replied.

"O, the Muse of Tragedy! I've been called a Muse too—but a merry one."

"Here's a fine, life-like woman's bust," interrupted Prince Xaver. "It's a speaking likeness, and beautifully caught."

He was standing before the bust at which Franz had been working. Lisa went up to it: "Who is it?" she asked.

"A cousin of Herr von Strahl's, Countess Lauingen," answered the Prince.

"Is she here?" went on Lisa.

"O, no, she's at home."

"It's a masterpiece!" said the Prince. "That marble head will make you famous. You must make busts your special line."

"And how wonderful to be able to do it from memory," said Lisa.

"Not so wonderful—considering that my cousin and I grew up together," answered Franz.

"I've just thought of a capital plan," said Lisa suddenly. "You must make our fellow countryman famous, Count. He must do your bust."

"Yes and no," answered the Prince. "I will help him to fame, but with *your* bust, not mine."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Lisa. "I shall live in marble. That's not given to everybody, and I appreciate the honor quite beyond anything."

She also congratulated herself secretly that her speech had produced the desired effect.

"When can you begin it, Herr von Strahl?" asked the Prince.

"Whenever you like, Herr Graf."

"Well, then, begin it at once."

"O," exclaimed Lisa. "I've got my hat on."

"It's easily removed."

"But my hair's not done for a sitting. I must think seriously about the style best suited for a bust. Now I'm glad we came to Rome. I've been plagued with the everlasting sight-seeing. I oughtn't to say it, I suppose."

She went off in high glee with Prince Xaver, and left Franz perfectly dazed to think that Telesphor's life had been wrecked by this uneducated creature, without brain or soul. He worked on till sunset, then walked out through the vineyards and the Porta Pia to the Campagna.

Lisa Rink made her appearance on the following morning. She wore no hat, and her hair was most becomingly done, with a view to the bust.

"Haven't I been clever?" she said as she sat down before Franz. "I had quite an inspiration over the ivy-spray which you see in my hair."

"It was quite an artistic inspiration," said Franz approvingly. "It's really pretty and ornamental."

"How soon will the bust be ready?" asked Lisa in her excitement.

"Marble busts are not done off like photographs," laughed Franz; "they may take months."

"Months! Why, I'm only going to be some weeks here," exclaimed Lisa.

"The chief thing is to catch a good likeness, and this can be done before you go. If it were necessary, you would be able to stay a week longer."

"Not easily," said Lisa.

"It can't be done," added Frau Rink, who accompanied her daughter.

"Oh, it could if I wished it, but I don't wish it," answered Lisa. "I'm beginning to long for my art. You'll understand that, Herr von Strahl."

"Perfectly, mein Fräulein. In the long run an idle life is unbearable."

"I can't understand your work being attractive. You're always alone in this uncomfortable room, standing before a brown lump of clay trying to shape it into form."

"It depends upon what is being shaped out of the clay. It's the case of the chrysalis and the butterfly. At times, indeed often, it's hard work, but so is life itself. The artist has his full share of the universal law."

"Are you a Communist?" asked Lisa, looking at him with her large eyes.

"What makes you think so?" he asked, laughing.

"Because you speak of work as a universal law, and I've heard that Communists require every one to work and to be rewarded for it."

"Don't be afraid. I'm no Communist in that sense. Reward comes for us all in the evening."

"What do you mean by the evening?" asked Lisa, always catching at Franz' last word without understanding it.

"Eternity," he answered quietly.

"Oh, that's a long way off. I've still an immense time before me. We'll talk of something else. Do you like sculpturing men's or women's heads?"

"I like each in its way."

"I think women's heads much the prettier, Herr von Strahl."

"You've a right to think so. We talk of women as the fair sex."

"Do you think the 'strong sex' is as true a saying?"

"Not always."

"Neither do I, for any one who is strong ought to be so always. Beauty is always beauty."

"Beauty is a gift independent of the possessor's will. Strength is a virtue which has something to say to will. But a strong will may be shaken and turned aside from heavenly things. St. Peter denied his Lord, and then went back to Him, and was crucified upon the Janiculus."

"Do you really believe it?" she asked incredulously.

"It's a very ancient tradition in the Church—not an article of faith."

"How odd!" thought Lisa to herself. "Every topic which I try with him gets most tiresomely serious. He's not had a single word of admiration for me."

"I love my art best of all," she began again.

"Now, *you* can enthuse only the few artists and connoisseurs who come to your studio. I electrify an audience of thousands. Don't you think I am to be envied?"

"An actor's art is a passing thing, and so is the applause it calls forth. It makes a noise, and is over. There are better things."

"Are there? I'm longing to hear about them."

"When old Giotto—"

"Giotto? Was he an actor?"

"No, he was a Florentine painter of the fourteenth century. When he finished his Madonna with the Holy Infant, the people of Florence poured into his studio to admire it with all reverence, and then they carried the wonderful picture in solemn procession to the Church of Sta. Maria dei Fiori, where it has remained till this day. If it is an object of admiration, it is still more an object of prayer. Does not this power of art, and this influence which it has, seem to you far higher than gaining the applause of a mixed crowd, who are acted upon by stage flummery and all its accompaniments, painted scenes, footlights, and tinsel gold?"

"Certainly not. What has the artist for himself?"

"He has the consciousness of having worked for the glory of God."

"But, Herr von Strahl," said Lisa, bursting out with a laugh, "I can't possibly play my parts for the glory of God."

"That's true enough, and for this very reason I fail to see that your calling is an enviable one, even

if it should call forth the loudest applause from all the quarters of the world."

"Well, I see well enough what your 'better things' are, Herr von Strahl. They're much too good for me," said Lisa, impatiently.

"Oh, please don't move your lips. It spoils the pretty curve of the mouth," exclaimed Franz.

This single word appeased Lisa, whose childish vanity was wounded. Franz closed the sitting as rapidly as possible.

"For the future I shall beg the Prince to come with me," said Lisa. "I fear that your serious conversation gives me an expression which might prevent people from recognizing me. I should be so sorry."

"So should I," said Franz. "I shall be very pleased if you will provide for your better entertainment."

"Dear, what a bore that marble man is!" said Lisa to her mother in the carriage. "I'm quite weary of the business already."

"Have a little patience, Lisi, and think what you must be to have your bust taken in marble by the Prince's orders," said Frau Rink with an air of importance.

Lisa appeared at the next sitting with a crowd of men. Prince Xaver brought with him some English acquaintances, and together they kept Lisa amused in her own way. One of them, a Shropshire baronet, to show he set store by the Prince's society, ordered a marble St. John the Baptist of Franz. If it satisfied him he promised to purchase a Holy Child.

"See what good fortune I bring you," said Lisa in high good temper.

Franz bowed, and one of the Englishmen said : "That's what the Fairy Queen does at all times and in all places." How well, thought Lisa, the remark would have sounded from Franz.

The likeness was finished and a great success. Franz was not sorry, for he hardly knew his grave, silent studio under the ordeal of noisy sittings. In college days his companions had called him Achilles the invulnerable. Prince Xaver called him the hermit of Sant' Isidoro, and declared that his studio was mysterious enough to furnish the plot for a novel. Franz laughed, without committing himself to an answer, for he had his secret.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANGEL OF THE RESURRECTION.

FLORESTINE, in deep mourning, was sitting alone at her writing-table in her town-house. It was a bitter February day. An icy north-westerly wind was blowing, and the streets were deep in snow.

Florestine was writing a letter. She said :

“ MY DEAR FRANZ :

“ You will have heard from your mother all that has befallen me—trouble upon trouble. My father dead ; my Florestan dead ; my second little boy dead too, though, thank God, he lived long enough to be baptized. All this has happened in the last four months. I know, of course, that my sorrows are not specially heavy, and that God tries other souls far more. My father was an old man, and he died holily, as he had lived. I would gladly have kept both my father and my children a little longer, and when I think how different things were this time last year, I feel very sad. Now, I come to a request, dear Franz, and I think it will give you pleasure. I should like you to do me an Angel of the Resurrection in marble for our vault at Cronenstein. He sat at the Tomb to speak of life, and that is what he will do for us. I

hope you like my thought, and will set about executing it as soon as your other work will allow you."

Oswald came in whilst she was writing. He sat down in an easy chair and dipped into a book or two on the table. He was much altered, his eye weary and restless, his face pale and spiritless.

"Who is your correspondent, Flore?" he asked as she laid down her pen.

"Franz. I am writing about our plan," and she handed him the letter. He ran his eyes over it, and added at the bottom: "Make the Angel of the Resurrection like Florestine. She is *my* angel.

"OSWALD."

What had happened? Florestine did not know, though it was the talk of the town. At Cronenstein she had noticed a change in Oswald, and had remarked it to her aunt. Some overwhelming attraction seemed to tear him from her side. The restlessness, contrariness and uncertainty of his demeanor pointed to a sharp inward struggle of some kind. What could have gained so tremendous a hold over Oswald? Her anguish was so great that it seemed to soften her grief for father and children. That was a peaceful sorrow. She mourned to herself over their departed happiness, for unhappy he undoubtedly was. Florestine noticed Oswald's words at the bottom of her letter.

"What do you mean, Oswald?" she asked.

"I mean that perhaps *you* may be able to save me," he said brokenly.

His words filled her with alarm and yet with joy. She sat down by him, took his hand tenderly in her own and said : " Tell me, Oswald, where the danger is."

He paused to steady his voice and said :

" We must begin curtailing our expenses, Flore. Seeheim is no longer mine ; it is sold—or rather, it is gone."

" *Gone?* What do you mean ? "

" Seeheim represented my fortune. I've lost it, and am a pauper."

" Don't forget that you have got Cronenstein, Oswald. But what have you been doing with Seeheim ? "

Oswald sprang up in his agitation, and exclaimed :

" I have been gambling ! "

" Tell me everything, dear Oswald. Oh, I am so relieved that you *will* speak ! "

" I wish I had spoken sooner."

" So do I, but at least speak now. Two are stronger than one."

" That's my hope. I will tell you everything—but will you still care for me the same ? "

" Need you ask, Oswald ? "

" I must go back a long, long way to make you understand how I fell into this wretched plight. My father was an inveterate gambler, yet he did not risk either fortune or reputation by it. I inherited his propensity, I suppose, but not his calmer temperament. Cards were my greatest delight, and at fourteen I preferred them to sport of any kind. They put everything else out of my head. Even while I was at the Gymnasium, I had already won

and lost rather large sums. It was a great trouble to my mother ; she reproached me, both tenderly and sternly, and I promised to give up gambling because it worried her. I did not do so thoroughly, for I could not or would not see that gambling is wrong in itself. At the University I found greater opportunities for following my bent, and that strengthened it. Still I worked well. If I had not been so persistently unlucky, my mother would have known nothing about it ; as it was I sometimes appealed to her, because I disliked being always at my guardian, your uncle, Frankenhausen, to help me out with my gambling debts. He was very fond of me ; but my unfortunate passion grieved him as much as it did my mother, and he would often put it strongly before me that if I went on throwing away my time and my money I should impoverish myself, and become enervated mentally and physically, a useless, or rather worthless, member of society. I protested firmly against this prediction and called what was really a passion by the name of engrossing pursuit.

“ I came of age when I was twenty-one, consequently into my fortune. As I wished to continue my studies for a year longer, I left my affairs still in my guardian’s hands. ‘ Only give up those wretched cards,’ he would say, ‘ and you ’ll be perfect.’ My mother spoke in the same strain. I spent my vacation that year at different Baths on the Rhine, played furiously, and with fearful ill-luck. I already had debts which absorbed more than one year’s income, and I was mad to cover them by a happy turn of luck. I went to Paris, and the first man I came across was

a fellow-countryman, who lived by gambling. I did not know it. He recognized me and kept me firmly in his clutches. Well, instead of travelling for a year, I spent it gambling in Paris! I became fully aware that it was no mere pastime, but an all-absorbing passion. I saw I should play away my last farthing, if I could not check myself. I left Paris and went to Italy, and at first the change of scene had a good effect. But I wanted more. I should have waged war to the knife against my passion, and I never did it. Naples was a second Paris. I lost everything in six months, and had no longer enough to live upon. I can't say what would have happened had I not had a letter from Frankenhaußen. He wrote : ' Be a man. Come back at once : put Seeheim and all your affairs into my hands, reduce your expenses, get into diplomacy, and in six or seven years' time I shall hope to see you in better plight. But come home *at once*, or I shall leave you to your fate.' This letter gave me a great shock, and I did return on the spot. The dear man carried out his plan, and I entered diplomacy. Being only a small attaché, I played a very modest rôle in society, and this was a capital thing for me. I had fewer temptations, and I sobered down. I found that I *could* live without gambling, and the knowledge increased my self-confidence. I resumed going to the sacraments, which I had neglected during those miserable years. My ambassadress encouraged me by word and example. I owed much to her, for she showed me what religion can be in a woman's life, and coming in contact with her did me good.

This went on for four years. Then her husband died and she went back to her country-place. I became a secretary and was removed. I scarcely remembered my former madness and nothing would induce me to touch a card. I persevered for seven years, and that excellent Frankenhausen set my affairs in order, and saved Seeheim for me. I had a suitable fortune and could contemplate marrying with a good conscience. Frankenhausen was very eager for our marriage, dearest Flore, and you know well enough whether *I* was after my visit to Croonenstein. Your father knew of my former misdeeds and asked me about them. I could truthfully say I was cured, and he expressed himself satisfied. He gave me his word never to mention the past to you. Last summer when you went to nurse him at Croonenstein I remained here for the House. My mother, Amelia Verden, and all the ladies we know were away, so that I saw only men. I happened to sit down one day at a table to watch four capital whist players. In the middle of the rubber one of the men was called off by a telegram. He thrust his cards into my hand, saying he would be back in half an hour. Thus, after ten years, I found myself once more at a card-table, by a mere accident. In a quarter of an hour I was wholly absorbed in the game, and unconscious of time. The man did not come back, and the other three were mad whist players, so there we sat till three o'clock in the morning. I had wonderful luck, and the stakes were high. I was invited to play again on the following evening and did so, and in this way my long sup-

pressed passion burst out afresh. I tried to resist it. I went to Cronenstein. After a few days, I always grew restless and depressed, and ended by breaking my good resolutions. I am less than a man, Flore, when the demon takes me."

"Go on, Oswald," she said. "You haven't told me all."

"No, indeed. Well, I went from whist to games of chance. At first I had wonderful luck, then persistently bad, and I went on and on, till I was ruined. The long and the short of it is that I have played away Seeheim, and have lost every farthing that I possessed."

"Cronenstein is still ours," said Florestine, "and now that I know what the trouble is, I feel stronger and more hopeful."

"Dearest Flore, you cannot possibly feel any confidence in me."

"I can indeed. Did you not overcome yourself before? But tell me who has bought Seeheim?"

"Prince Xaver. It seems that he wishes to marry Lisa Rink morganatically, and to dower her with Seeheim."

"Lisa Rink. . . . Frau von Seeheim!"

They talked over many things connected with their changed circumstances, and Florestine was as calm and natural with it all as if the loss of fortune concerned a stranger, not her husband. She assured him that they could live very comfortably on the Cronenstein property, without always spending the winter in town. She was so calm and composed that

Oswald wondered at her. At last he said: "I feel easier now that you know everything."

"Then you must promise to tell me faithfully when the weakness is upon you."

He gave her his word, and no sooner was she alone, than the tears, which she had kept back with supernatural strength, poured down her cheeks. Her natural feelings burst forth in all their intensity, as if to make up for the violence she had done to them. For months past she had been tortured by anxiety, and now that she knew all, her heart seemed breaking. She had been so proud of Oswald, and he had shattered her pride, her peace, and happiness. "Oswald a gambler!" she murmured brokenly, as she fell on her knees. "God help us!"

CHAPTER XII.

“ DEO SERVIRE REGNARE EST.”

“ How is the bust getting on?” asked a tall, powerfully-built man, walking into Franz von Strahl’s studio one day. “ Will it soon be ready, eh ? ”

“ No, indeed, Sir Robert,” answered Franz laughing. “ You give me so many interesting bits of work to do that I cannot get through them all quickly. Besides delicate marble carving requires time.”

“ Of course, of course. I put no pressure on you. Artists have their peculiarities and go their own way, and they do wisely. Every one should have a way of his own.”

Franz nodded assent, and continued to work at his marble statue of St. John the Baptist.

“ How naturally the lamb’s wool comes out,” went on Sir Robert Balmond. “ There’s no mistake about it, Herr von Strahl, you’re an artist; not only in lamb’s wool, but in every way. You understand me, don’t you ? ”

“ I understand that you are very kind, Sir Robert.”

“ That’s a happy way of putting it. But I wanted to tell you that my Rosabel can’t come to-day. The last days of the carnival have tired her out and given her a little chill, so she must rest herself.”

"Why do you allow your delicate daughter to indulge in the carnival campaign, Sir Robert?"

"Why do I allow her? Why, to be like every one else."

"That's no reason for the man who has his own way of doing things," said Franz laughing.

"Yes, it is, for the man who doesn't wish to be outlawed from society. You can't judge of these matters in this retired studio of yours."

"There you may be right," answered Franz quietly.

"That is to say—don't misunderstand me, Herr von Strahl, I know that you belong to a good family and are quite at home in society, or might be if you liked—Prince Xaver told me so last autumn—but I mean to say that you can't judge men and women through your knowledge of marble figures. My dealings are with people in purple and fine linen; not with St. John the Baptist in his lambs' wool. There's the difference."

"I quite recognize it, Sir Robert."

"Well, it's settled that I am to go to England in May without Lady Balmond or Rosabel. The thick of the season would be too much for my little girl, and yet she couldn't keep out of it if she went. So they are to stay here, at Frascati, that's to say, or somewhere in the mountains. They go to Sorrento in August for sea-bathing, and I shall meet them again in October to spend the winter here. People talk of Rome being unsafe, and the chances of war, but I feel the Holy Father's presence a certain security."

“And if it comes to the worst we can all die with him!” exclaimed Franz.

“Die, Herr von Strahl? I would rather live with him.”

“Well, Sir Robert, we are all living as it is, and I myself want to do a good deal before I leave the world.”

“I can readily believe it. At your age a man wants to enjoy life a bit. But do begin, and don’t remain the hermit of Sant’ Isidoro. Come to our house. The racket of the carnival is over, and we see only our particular friends—you are one of them. Rosabel would be delighted to talk art with you, and Lady Balmond quite appreciates you.”

“I know how kind you and Lady Balmond are, Sir Robert, and I value your goodness. But a man can’t serve two masters—and society soon becomes a master.”

“But you have got a long life before you to work!”

“Who can tell that, Sir Robert?”

“Have you presentiments?” exclaimed Sir Robert. “Why, there you are! Hypochondria, melancholy, nervous exhaustion.”

“Nothing of the sort!” interrupted Franz. “I don’t know how to be dull—but my work is my life.”

“Astonishing young man!” said Sir Robert pensively. “Allow me to ask you a question. Would you be glad to come into a fortune before long?”

“I may safely answer that question. I shouldn’t know what to do with it.”

" So you are moved by pure love of your art ? "

" Sir Robert, in a few years' time when your orders for Balmond Castle and one I have had from home to-day are all quite finished, you will understand everything—"

" Then you'll introduce us to your bride ? "

" To my bride ? " repeated Franz in surprise.

" Yes. Why not, Herr von Strahl ? "

" I have no bride in view," added Franz, with grave determination.

" Extraordinary, incomprehensible youth ! Well, go your own way in the matter. Rosabel will come to-morrow."

And Rosabel duly appeared. She was a lovable creature with her charm of fresh unconsciousness and simplicity, which was as morning dew on the spring flower. She had been excellently brought up by her mother, and had left the Sacred Heart Convent in Paris only a few months previously. In Rome she was to study Italian, and perfect herself in painting.

" For our Rosabel is to be a bit of perfection," her father used to say. " Lady Balmond looks after her soul and everything connected with heaven; and I look after her mind and her relations with the world."

Happily for Rosabel, her mother knew how to hold her own in the latter point, and if she could not prevent Rosabel from being taken out, she controlled gayeties which would have seriously interfered with studies. Rosabel was pleased with anything her father and mother wished. Her prettiness received an addi-

tional charm from the gold setting of Sir Robert's enormous fortune. Sir Robert was so delighted with Lisa Rink's bust that he wished the same noble art to immortalize his Rosabel, and therefore entrusted Franz to take her bust also. Sir Robert generally accompanied her, Lady Balmond occasionally ; both of them enjoyed a talk with Franz. Rosabel held her tongue, but for all that she was neither absent nor bored. Her face showed her interest in the conversation, especially when Franz spoke. To-day, too, she was all attention, as everything he said seemed so utterly different from the conversation she was wont to hear.

“ You won't stay all the summer in Rome, Herr von Strahl, nor be here for the fever months, will you ? ” asked Sir Robert.

“ I was here all through last summer except for an occasional day at Porto d'Anzio or elsewhere.”

“ You oughtn't to play so fast and loose with your Teutonic constitution. Take it easy, as other people do, and go up into the mountains.”

“ I've no pleasure in leaving my work for more than a day or two.”

“ Really you are mad about work.”

“ It is our birthright. It will make or unmake us.”

“ How so, Herr von Strahl ? ”

“ The Bible calls a long life full of labor a precious life. The world thinks a long, idle life precious ; consequently God's estimate differs from that of the world.”

“ But what's my life in the sight of God ? ” asked Sir Robert.

"How can I tell?" replied Franz laughing. "One man has a block of marble before him from which he has to sculpture the crucifix; another sculptures the crucifix in his own heart. Both are hard, and perhaps you do the latter much more earnestly than I the former, Sir Robert."

Rosabel thought to herself that Franz did both, but she would not have said so for anything in the world. Her father answered heartily :

"Nothing of the sort, Herr von Strahl. Bob Balmond is an honest fellow, but not high up in perfection. You are bent upon the seventh heaven, whereas I shall thank God if I escape hell."

"It's my daily prayer, Sir Robert, that I may escape hell. The world is an evil place, and only God can save us from falling into temptation."

"O, come, the world is not so bad as all that. What do you say, Rosabel ?"

"I don't know enough about it," she answered.

"I'm not talking of your balls and gayeties, Miss Balmond," went on Franz. "I am talking of worldliness and worldly spirit as opposed to the Christian. We ought to be glad to live in times when we can prove our disinterested love for the Church by sacrificing fortune, time, and life itself perhaps, in her service."

"Why, my dear Herr von Strahl, you have the makings of a martyr," exclaimed Sir Robert with great warmth. "But you are quite right—it is not enough in our days to be a Catholic; one needs to be a good Catholic, fired with zeal for the Church. And now a light is dawning upon me about you—a

very strong light. You mean to become a Papal Zouave as soon as ever there is war, and it won't be long coming! You want to sacrifice even your beloved art to this holy cause, and you mean to work yourself to death before joining the Zouaves. That's what it is! Well, I am heartily glad of it. Perhaps my two boys may come back before that from India, and they, too, shall enlist for the Pope."

"Papa dear, don't be so bent on war," interrupted Rosabel. "There ought to be some good men left in the world."

"Perhaps some men of sacrifice would do more for it than a few good men, Miss Rosabel," answered Franz. "Nothing short of heroism will counteract the materialism of the age."

"Of course, of course! We all admire a St. Francis Xavier, a Vincent of Paul, a Benedict, but who can imitate their deeds?"

"Only God's chosen ones, Sir Robert. But we can all imitate their spirit, whatever our work in life may be. *Deo servire regnare est.*"

Sir Robert looked down demurely; Rosabel was, as usual, silent, so there followed a pause which each filled up with his own thoughts. Franz was so taken up with his work that he did not notice it, nor did Rosabel. His words would echo all through her life, and she had never felt so great a desire in her own mind to see him at her father's house.

"What's the matter with you, Rosabel?" said her father all at once. "You look out of spirits, and now you're blushing furiously."

"The sitting is too long and is tiring her," exclaimed Franz.

"No, indeed, it's not, Herr von Strahl. There is nothing the matter with me, papa, dear," stammered Rosabel, bewildered and startled out of her thoughts.

"Don't overtire yourself, my dear child. We will make that enough for to-day, Herr von Strahl, and will come back to-morrow," and Sir Robert rose as he spoke.

Rosabel was obliged to do the same, little as she wished it, and Franz was once more alone with his marble busts and his thoughts.

"An interesting young fellow, isn't he, Rosabel?" said Sir Robert innocently to his daughter. "It's difficult to say whether he excels most as an artist or as a man."

Rosabel was quite clear on the point, but she did not venture to express her feelings, and Sir Robert went on: "A young man with so much sense of duty, so much religion and strength of purpose, is a wonder. He fills me with amazement, and at the same time I like him as if he were nothing out of the common. There's something sterling about these Germans when they are good, and not given up to their philosophy mania . . . He goes very far, certainly, yet he has Christian truth on his side."

"*Deo servire regnare est*," said Rosabel, as if to herself.

"There, you have remembered the Latin!" exclaimed Sir Robert.

"Latin!" repeated Rosabel, embarrassed. "I

thought it was Italian pronounced in a German way."

"Italian! What are you thinking about? Is *est* Italian? You might as well say it was Chinese. You must give more attention to your Italian, Rosabel, and you might occasionally talk German with Herr von Strahl for practice."

"Not for anything, papa, dear. I really cannot talk his mother-tongue to a man of his kind."

"A man of his kind, Rosabel! Why, is he the Grand Turk, or something as bad, that we mayn't venture to speak to him? You talk French quite freely with other men who are in a better position than he is."

"I don't know how it is, but Herr von Strahl impresses me, and other men don't, unless they are old and venerable-looking," said Rosabel. "He has a wonderfully noble face."

"Yes, he's a gentleman to the backbone."

Rosabel did not venture on further disclosures, but she thought to herself that a man may impress you as a gentleman without being the least what Franz was.

Work made his days fly. Easter ushered in the most lovely spring weather, and as Rosabel was no longer required for sittings, Sir Robert thought it time to settle his wife and daughter at some place in the mountains. They finally decided on Frascati, as it combines many advantages, and had been already chosen by two English families amongst their friends. Sir Robert and Lady Balmond so kindly pressed Franz to spend at least Sundays at Frascati that he could not well refuse.

"I never pressed you to come to us in Rome," said Lady Balmond, "because I see only too well how little you care for society. But quiet, green, fresh Frascati, will do you good and delight your artist eye, and with us you will not be troubled by the world."

"I should be glad enough to go to Frascati, too, and to leave London alone," said Sir Robert, "but it won't do! I must sacrifice myself to the season."

Franz laughed incredulously.

"Do you hear, Herr von Strahl?" he repeated, emphatically. "I must sacrifice myself. What would people think if not one of the Balmonds were to be seen? It won't do to risk what they might think. I must keep a warm place for our children in our best society. If I listened to my inclinations, I should remain with my wife and daughter, but the father of a family is required to make sacrifices, Herr von Strahl."

It was, in truth, a sort of sacrifice to good Sir Robert, as he was devoted to Rosabel and her mother. On the other hand he would not have run the risk of losing his footing amongst his own class for any consideration. He started as soon as they were comfortably settled at Frascati. Rosabel went there full of quiet happiness. She was to have her dearest wish; Franz was coming to her father's house.

CHAPTER XIII.

DECEPTION.

THE Medizinalrath Rabener had a failing which he shared with many other men. He showed the disagreeable side of his character to his wife as to nobody else, and was much less pleasant at home than abroad. Frances' small fortune was in his hands. Her prettiness, the mere prettiness of youth, was already on the wane. She had no fascinating qualities, for she no longer adored him. He now seemed to her perfectly commonplace. She found life irksome and monotonous with three small children and her housekeeping; it was a new and enlarged edition of her father's house. As she sat sewing at little frocks, she would often put down her needle, and stare in front of her.

"This is what I've been doing since I left school —since I was thirteen," she would say to herself. "When I used to sit sewing at home, and to look out of the window to see faces I knew by heart, I thought to myself, 'Patience! Sooner or later, he will come to release poor Fränz from her sewing.' And now he has been, and I am still at it. Then I could hope for better days; now I have nothing to hope."

Frances was interrupted in her discontented musings by the hasty entrance of her husband.

"If only you wouldn't sit at the window," he said crossly. "It makes a man afraid of coming into the house, your face is so black."

"My face is what God made it," she answered snappishly.

"*You* made its peevish expression. There's nothing on earth more trying than the face of a woman who is always dissatisfied."

"Of course. It's a reproach to her husband," said Frances icily.

"Not at all. It shows a discontented character, and that in married life is unbearable."

"Are you so delightful and so pleasant?" said Frances in a cutting tone. "I'm sorry to undeceive you. Your patients may find you so, but not your wife."

"Because she has the failing of all wives," said the Medizinalrath with a harsh laugh, as he opened the door.

"What is the failing of all wives?" asked Agatha, who was just coming in.

"Bad temper!" he answered roughly, and went off.

In the meantime Florestine was going the round of the town, seeking ladies who would consent to visit the poor. More accepted than refused, and she returned home quite delighted to the Castle. Oswald was fond of being at Cronenstein, and Florestine was happy because he was, though never out of anxiety on his account.

Her uncle, Frankenhausen, Oswald's guardian and fatherly friend, was bitterly grieved at the catas-

trophe which had ruined the fine Lauingen fortune. It affected him particularly because Florestine's marriage would not have taken place had he not held himself responsible for Oswald's improvement. He had loaded Oswald with reproaches and set before him most sternly the disgrace of his conduct, but, if not appeased, he was at least disarmed by Oswald's humble tone and manner.

"You are quite right in calling me a miserable fellow," he said, not attempting an excuse. "I have lost all respect for myself, and cannot expect others to respect me."

"Umph!" said Frankenhausen, who was angry because he cared so much. "Don't overdo it. You've some points. You've paid for your folly with the loss of your whole fortune. You're now on the road of amendment, and there is no question as yet of forfeiting general respect. Still the whole thing's incomprehensible,—absolutely incomprehensible!"

"Yes. I feel just the same in cold blood."

"But, bother it! who allows wretched cards to get his blood up to boiling pitch? It's against reason," growled Frankenhausen. "If I only could feel sure of you *now*."

"You may be—quite. I have suffered so much, and made poor Florestine so unhappy, that I should be a brute to begin again."

"And, besides, you must think of your finances, my dear fellow," added Frankenhausen. "Your fortune has disappeared down to the last farthing—you are living on Florestine's. If you run through that, what's to become of you?"

Florestine dreaded the winter for her husband's sake. In the middle of October, at the fall of the leaf, when the evenings were getting long, and the days chilly, the three were alone at Cronenstein. It was quite a change. Under different circumstances Florestine would have enjoyed it. She went out riding with her husband, they played together, and in the evenings he would read aloud whilst she and her aunt worked. But now she could not get rid of the fear that Oswald found it dull. She knew her husband too well and loved him too dearly not to be aware of the smallest cloud on his face, the slightest gloom in his mind, and she was not mistaken; both cloud and gloom were there.

All Souls' Day and its peaceful octave were over. They had kept it with the fervor which is felt over a recently closed grave.

"My happiness is buried with my father," said Florestine one day to Frau von Strahl. "I never wanted him more than now—Oswald is gone."

"Gone? Where can he be?" asked Frau von Strahl, pale with anxiety.

"Can I tell you? He got up very early this morning, and said he was going to shoot, but he did not take a gun. He certainly rode to the station, and yet I can hardly believe it is *that*. Oswald promised to tell me when he felt it coming on."

"Poor child! Promises can't cope with passion."

The day went on. Florestine was not capable of spending five minutes at the same occupation. She fancied she heard Oswald's step or his voice. Then she would throw herself on her knees before the

crucifix to beg God for light. It was growing dark when her door opened and Oswald walked in. The sudden transition from deep anxiety to joy was too much for her. She sank back half-fainting, gasping his name with effort. He knelt down by her, put his arms round her, and called her his sweet Flore.

“Not that—Oswald, only not *that!*” she said in a scarcely audible tone as she laid her head on his shoulder.

He looked heated, over-excited, and tired out.

“Where have you been? Don’t deceive me—tell me the truth,” said Florestine, when she was a little calmer.

Oswald sank into an arm-chair, and pressed both hands to his burning forehead. “Flore, if you only knew what a miserable creature I am you would have some pity on me.”

Florestine was always moved by this broken tone, and she answered tenderly: “Yes, dear Oswald, let me share your trouble. It will do me good. Tell me where you have been. You look tired.”

“I rode to the station and missed the train by two minutes. Then I rode to the second station, but the road is dreadfully roundabout over the hills. My horse was tired and I saw I could not manage it, so I changed my plan. It was Providence or my angel guardian. I gave my horse a few hours’ rest at a village inn, and then rode back. I have been eleven hours in the saddle.”

“But, Oswald, where did you mean to go? what was in your mind?”

"Going to town for a night's play, and I meant to get back to-morrow," said Oswald, excitedly.

"Thank God that you are back now!" answered Florestine. They went to dinner, and no more was said about it. A gnawing and ceaseless anxiety took possession of Florestine. If he stayed out riding longer than usual, or she did not find him in his room, she felt as if a dagger were piercing her through with the words, "He is gone!" ringing in her ears. At night it might truly be said of her, "I sleep, but my heart watcheth." Love and anxiety for him filled her dreams, and often she would awake and call him by his name in terrified tones, so fearful was she of losing him out of her sight. It was, as she said, keeping constant watch on the brink of a precipice.

Frau von Strahl did not forget that Florestine was the daughter of an exceedingly delicate mother, whose weak constitution she probably inherited. She feared for her niece the wearing anxiety of the last year and a half. So one evening when they were sitting cozily together, and the wind and rain were beating against the windows, she said:

"I don't see why you need stay here all the winter. Try a warm climate; it would be so good for Florestine."

"What do you think, Florette?" said Oswald in a tone of voice which betrayed his pleasure at the suggestion.

Florestine was lying on the sofa after a ride of three hours which she had taken with her husband in spite of the stormy weather, because he liked having her.

"Let us go by all means, Oswald, if you like it, but don't go on my account," she said.

"That's right," said Frau von Strahl laughing. "Neither of you want to go on your own account. But lose no time in starting. Naples is not reached in a day."

"Don't let us go to Naples," said Oswald with determination.

"Where then?" asked Florestine. "It's for you to choose."

"To Nice and its orange groves on the Mediterranean."

"Well, let it be Nice then!" said Florestine in her cheerful way. Oswald would be amused and that was sufficient for her. "You should have spoken before. We might have been at Nice all this time," she went on.

"I thought you would not care about going away."

"Not care about going with you, if *you* care about it, and to the dear south, too?"

"Only get off as soon as you can," said Frau von Strahl. "I will look after Cronenstein."

They could not prevail upon her to go with them, so they took her advice, and made an early start the following week.

"Here's an instance of a fine lady's changeable mind," said Frances Rabener, in her sour way, to her sisters. "In August she moves all X. to join her visiting society, and in November she throws the whole burden of it upon you, goes off to Italy, and gives no further thought to the poor."

"You are wrong, as usual," answered Agatha. "She is putting no burden upon us. She has undertaken the accounts and made them over to the Frau Majorin for the time of her absence, and she has told the steward to pay her subscription every month. We shall have everything except her dear self."

"The Countess has kindly promised to spend a day at Zürich to look up poor Teles," said Frau Hellmut.

"Poor Teles' is doing extremely well," said Frances. "I can't understand why you won't take my husband's word for it. He knows it from a friend."

"Our standard of doing well is not the same as yours," answered Agatha.

"And we shall never believe all *is* well with him as long as he doesn't write to mother," added Frau Hellmut.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAMALDOLESE AND DON SERAFINO.

ROSABEL was having a delightful spring at lovely Frascati. The visitors from Rome were numerous. Franz von Strahl came regularly every Saturday evening and went away early on Monday morning. The Sunday expeditions were by far the pleasantest to Rosabel. The sky was finer, the air sweeter, and the coloring more brilliant; the talk specially interesting. Was it God's own day which spread its charm over the green hills of Frascati? Rosabel imagined so, for it never occurred to her that the charm lay in Franz. He showed her no particular attention. He talked most with Lady Balmond or with Lady Blanche, Rosabel's nicest friend. Blanche spoke German rather fluently, and Rosabel would listen quietly when she and Franz von Strahl talked together.

On one of these lovely Sunday mornings all the English party went to hear Mass at the Camaldolesian convent, a solitude in a green valley. It was just the hermit life in community which interested them all, and Lady Balmond had obtained a papal dispensation to visit the cloister and enter the enclosure. The kind Prior had invited them to breakfast after Mass. During Mass the monks began to chant the Little Hours in choir, a simple, grave and beautiful

prayer, which fell gratefully upon the listeners' ears and hearts. The Prior took his guests into the enclosure with its two rows of small, white houses, each consisting of two rooms, and constituting the dwelling of one solitary.

"What a calm mind must be required to find peace here," said Lady Balmond to the Prior.

"The calm mind must be brought in. It is not made here," he answered. "You see how few we are, only twelve. Formerly it was different; but in these restless days contemplation is rare, especially with men. It is commoner in women. They are the 'doves in the hollow places of the wall.'"

"You are the twelve praying apostles," said Lady Dashville; "your life is one long sacrifice."

"Sometimes one act of sacrifice is heroic—but a life of it!" said Lady Balmond.

"*Deo servire regnare est!*" said a low voice, which no one heard except Franz. He noticed that it was Rosabel's.

"What would you say, mamma, if Lionel became a Camaldoiese hermit?" asked Blanche of Lady Dashville.

"I should know what to say; at present I don't," laughed Lady Dashville.

"As for you, Donna Bianca, you certainly must put on some white habit or other," said the Prior, playing upon her name.

"I fancy that my mother can give you an answer at once as to that matter, Father Prior."

"I can, Blanche. Your little soul is not white enough for a white habit."

"Amongst all these girls, Father, you will not find one who has a fancy for a convent," said Mrs. Granford.

"Not I,—nor I,—nor I," cried out her three daughters.

"And certainly not I," said Blanche.

"Much less I," added Blanche's cousin, Viola.

"And I least of all," said Rosabel.

"What naughty, worldly children! And we shall scarcely get a different answer from our young men if we question them. What do you say, Charles Granford?" said Lady Dashville.

"I echo my sister's words."

"I won't ask you, William. You're too young," she said to her own son.

"O, I beg your pardon, mother. At seventeen a fellow knows what he is made for, and I am not made for religion."

"And I won't ask Herr von Strahl either," went on Lady Dashville, "for an artist's place is in the world."

Franz laughed as he bowed, and Lady Dashville said to the Prior, "It's time we released you. Worldliness is catching."

But the hospitable Prior insisted on their breakfasting first. Coffee, bread, and strawberries were set before them by the lay Brothers. At breakfast Franz asked Rosabel whether she had been learning Latin with her brothers. All eyes were turned to Rosabel, who looked confused.

"Our girls have so many ornamental things to learn, and so many talents to acquire that they can-

not busy themselves with the classical languages," said Lady Balmond. "Perhaps they do in Germany?"

"O dear, no!" exclaimed Franz. "Girls who are in our position are taught all sorts of polite acquirements and arts till they are about seventeen. Then they devote themselves to music, painting, languages, according to their tastes, for two or three years, after which they marry, and quietly put aside all the fine things which have cost so much time, labor and money."

"In the olden time women used to learn Latin because it is the language of the Church, so as to join in liturgical prayers," said the Prior.

"Not only on that account," said Charles Granford. "In our old Anglo-Saxon convents, which exercised so enormous and learned an influence during the centuries of England's conversion, the nuns wrote and versified in Latin. The language of the Church was also that of all learning. Mary Stuart and Christina of Sweden spoke Latin with great ease, and even Marie Antoinette at fourteen was able to make a short Latin speech."

"And to punish these three queens for their learning, two of them lost their heads, and the third her kingdom," said Blanche.

"Oh, what reasoning!" exclaimed Charles Granford.

Rosabel, nevertheless, was grateful to the learned queens, for they had diverted attention from Franz and his question to her. Franz did not forget it. He wondered whether she grasped the meaning of the Latin words she had used. The party broke up

and returned to Frascati. In the evening Blanche proposed dancing in the garden ; "an elf dance in the moonshine on the green."

"We mustn't meddle with elves," said Charles Granford.

"Indeed, we must," exclaimed Blanche eagerly. "Your sister Helen, who's not allowed to dance, will kindly help my mother at the piano. Then we shall be just eight and can have the most lovely quadrilles, for of course you dance, Herr von Strahl!"

"With elves, yes, certainly, for that's an honor which an ordinary mortal doesn't get every day."

"And it's only at Frascati that an elf-dance is feasible," said Lady Dashville.

The villa, which she shared with Lady Balmond, was outside the town, and surrounded on every side by a garden. Lady Dashville and Helen Granford readily played one quadrille after the other, and the elves danced with mortals. Mrs. Granford and the Abbé Denys, William Dashville's tutor, played chess ; Lady Balmond read and took an occasional turn in the garden to see that Rosabel was not overdoing herself.

At last the piano stopped. Lady Dashville stood at the door and said : "Here's midnight. I say with Lady Macbeth 'to bed, to bed.'" They separated for the night.

In all the noise and merriment Franz had found no opportunity of putting his question to Rosabel, and now he would have to wait for a whole week. This set him thinking more than usual, and with unwonted interest, of Rosabel.

At Frascati they were much occupied with Franz. The artist who taught Rosabel, Blanche, and Viola, knew him well as a most active member of St. Vincent's Conference. "No one of us can compete with Don Serafino," the master said. "He is ready to leave his work at any time and undertake night-watching if only a poor man wants him."

"Who is this Don Serafino?" asked Viola.

"I fancy you know him as Don Francesco," answered the artist, "but we prefer calling him Serafino. We think it suits him best."

"We do not adopt the Italian custom of calling people by their Christian names, signor," answered Blanche. "We might have to do with a person for years without arriving at his Christian name, and we don't know a Don Francesco more than a Don Serafino."

"How curious!" said the artist.

"Of course you mean Herr von Strahl, don't you?" asked Rosabel.

"Of course I do, but how much better to give him his Christian name as we do. Francis is a truly blessed name."

"I like the custom of Christian names," said Blanche. "In our country it is not adopted, perhaps because patron saints are given up."

"What made you guess so soon that the signor was speaking of Herr von Strahl?" said Viola to Rosabel.

"Oh, the likeness of the portrait."

"And in future he shall be Don Serafino amongst us, shan't he, Rosabel?"

"Only don't tell him that I praised him," exclaimed the artist. "He would be angry with me."

"Yet artists are supposed to crave for praise," said Blanche lightly.

"Donna Bianca is rather naughty. I was talking of the man rather than the artist. However I *will* say that as to praise, men and artists are pretty much the same."

The painting-master came on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, and the girls usually spent those days at their easels in their studio. This art temple was closed to every one except Lady Balmond and Lady Dashville. The following Saturday morning they were working together in the little room. Mlle. Henrion, Viola's French governess, was present. When the master reproved Viola for giddiness, she seconded him by expressive signs and nods. All at once they heard Lady Balmond's voice and a man's step approaching the door.

"Ecco, Don Serafino!" said the master as the door opened, and Lady Balmond came in with Franz. Lady Balmond brought him in to see the young artists at work, but he assured her that coloring was not his line. He contented himself with praising them, even Viola, who looked triumphantly at both master and governess. Blanche was copying the dome of St. Peter's from the pine-woods of the Villa Pamili, in the warm coloring of evening.

"It is a truly Roman picture," said Lady Balmond. "Our St. Paul's too has a dome, but instead of evergreen oaks and pines in the background, there

are grimy chimney-pots and roofs; gray fog and smuttiness instead of the rosy Italian sky."

They made an expedition the next day to Grotta Ferrata through the villa of the Propaganda. As usual, Mrs. Granford and her children were with them, and also two or three cousins of Lady Dashville's from Malta. They were a larger party than ever, and bright as usual. The girls in their white dresses and light ribbons were the nymphs in the green shades of the forest. Their mothers were pleased to see their enjoyment, and only Mlle. Henrion shook her head from time to time when Viola indulged in too loud a laugh. Several mules with their drivers went with them, in case they were tired. In all the stir and movement of the merry party, Franz could well venture to ask Rosabel whether she understood Latin.

"No," she said, in the shy way she had with him.

"No?" he repeated. "So you did not understand what you said to me last week at the Camaldoli?"

"Yes, I did, perfectly. Is it so difficult to understand *Deo servire regnare est?*"

"Has it struck you how much this service may require of us?"

"Yes, indeed. High perfection is not won without trouble."

"Say without sacrifice."

"Sacrifice!" exclaimed Rosabel, casting a frightened look at Franz.

"Yes, sacrifice," he said, laughing. "No way of serving God without sacrifice has yet been discovered."

A feeling of intense sadness suddenly arose in Rosabel's mind, she could not tell why or wherefore. Franz noticed it, and said cheerily :

" You mustn't bother your head with Latin, Donna Rosabel ; it is too hard work. And where did you get *Deo servire regnare est?* "

" From you," answered Rosabel, who had regained her composure.

" From me ? " he asked, surprised.

" You said it one day last winter when you were talking to my father at the time you were working at my bust, and from your saying it I have remembered it."

" From *my* saying it ? " he repeated slowly.

" Why, yes ! " answered Rosabel, half laughing, yet constrained, as she looked up at him.

" You shouldn't remember my idle words ! " he exclaimed.

" Can I help it ? " she asked simply.

" Don Serafino ! Don Serafino, you'll make an exception to your rule, won't you ? " called out Blanche.

" To what rule ? " he asked, relieved at the interruption.

" To that most highly pedantic rule you have of going back to Rome early on Monday morning, You might be a Camaldolesian hermit by the way you keep it. To-morrow you must ride with us to Rocca di Papa and Monte Cavo. My cousins can't leave without going there. Now, you'll come with us, won't you ? "

" I should be delighted, if it were not for my

pedantic rule. I mustn't make more Sundays than there are."

"You really are dreadfully wooden," exclaimed Blanche.

"A man must practise mortification. Think what it is to decline going in your company to Monte Cavo!"

"You're laughing at us; but you won't gain me to your mortification-mania. I am only mortified when I can't help myself."

They all arrived in excellent spirits at Grotto Ferrata, the ancient monastery where Greek monks of St. Basil's Rule have chanted psalms for eighteen centuries. Rosabel was the only exception to the general gayety. Her talk with Franz had depressed her, she did not know why.

Franz gave them a surprise the following Saturday by walking, at nine o'clock in the morning, into the Frascati studio in company with the drawing-master. Viola danced up to him in high glee, remembering his words of praise.

"This is delightful," she exclaimed. "You are going to give us a lesson."

"You are spoiling your daily routine," said Blanche, with slight sarcasm.

Rosabel said nothing, but her eyes spoke.

"I have come to take leave of Lady Balmond," answered Franz. "I am going to-night to Carrara after blocks of marble, and have only just time to say good-by to you all."

"But you will come back before we go to Sorrento?" asked Blanche.

"Not if you are going on the eighth of August, as

you intended. That's only ten days now, and I have business in Switzerland."

"How sad!" exclaimed Blanche. "You are going to-day, and Mrs. Granford in a few days. Our last days at Frascati will be very sad."

"Partings always are," said the master.

"O signor, you make me quite melancholy," said Viola.

"*Auf Wiedersehen,*" said the girls, as they shook hands with Franz, "*auf Wiedersehen* in November."

Rosabel did as the others did, but there was a deep sadness in her dark, soft eyes. Franz regained his quiet studio once more, and felt that a crisis in his life was over.

Two months passed away. One morning at the end of October Sir Robert Balmond walked in.

"Here I am again, Herr von Strahl, to inspect your proceedings, and to see whether you've been properly diligent," he exclaimed in a friendly tone.

"Your orders came first, Sir Robert, and I hope you will be satisfied," answered Franz heartily, shaking the powerful hand Sir Robert held out. Then he uncovered Rosabel's bust and the statue of St. John the Baptist. Two works of art, ideal in conception and perfect in execution, stood out in their dazzling marble whiteness before Sir Robert's astonished eyes.

"My own Rosabel—what a dear little face it is!" he exclaimed delighted. "Is she really so pretty as this? The marble is chiseled as if it were a lily leaf. It must be this which gives her an angelic look, isn't it?"

"O, no, Sir Robert. I cannot add to your daughter's beauty."

"And that little St. John, too, with his *Agnus Dei* staff. He looks as if he were far more knowing than we ordinary mortals concerning things in general, and still what a child he is with his curly head. It'll look uncommonly well in our chapel. But, Herr von Strahl, I want to speak to you."

"We *are* speaking to each other," laughed Franz.

"Yes, but I mean speaking in earnest upon a matter of the highest importance. I shall want your undivided attention."

"May I ask you to go up there?" answered Franz, pointing to the narrow corkscrew staircase which led from his studio to his room. When Sir Robert reached the top, he sat himself down on a straw chair, and said earnestly:

"Now, let's have a good talk, and get to the bottom of certain matters."

Franz bowed in silence. He thought Sir Robert was alluding to his payment. When, however, Sir Robert started the conversation with the abrupt question: "Do you care for my Rosabel?" he drew back, and replied gravely,

"I think I have never given you any reason for putting me this question."

"You never gave me any, certainly."

"Then you allude to some one else, Sir Robert?"

"Sit down beside me, and let us have a few words in confidence. I am perfectly open with you, and I hope you will be so with me."

"I give you my word that I will, Sir Robert."

"Very well. Now listen to what I've got to say. Since Lady Balmond has been at Sorrento she has noticed a change in Rosabel—a slight depression—something sad and strange, which is unnatural to her. She was in high spirits all through our stay at Frascati, and at Sorrento she had just as many opportunities for pleasure as at the former place. Lady Balmond has noticed this change from that day at Frascati when you suddenly said you were going to Switzerland. She fancies perhaps that you had a feeling for Rosabel, and went away on purpose. My Rosabel has a right to make one of the best matches in England. We might look very high, but her happiness is more to us than all the rest, and we feel sure it would be safe in your hands. So if you and Rosabel are of one mind, we will not oppose you. If Lady Balmond has made a mistake, we will spend the winter at Nice instead of in Rome. Now, what do you say to it?"

"Go to Nice, Sir Robert," answered Franz emphatically.

"I hope that I have expressed myself clearly, Herr von Strahl, and that you grasp my meaning."

"Perfectly, and I can only repeat—go to Nice."

"So there is nothing between you and my daughter?"

"Nothing whatever, Sir Robert."

"And have Lady Balmond's instincts deceived her?"

Franz was silent.

"There's something puzzling in this business,"

went on Sir Robert. "Indeed, to begin with, it's puzzling that you, as an artist with an eye to the beautiful, can pass over Rosabel, and that you're not inclined to a marriage which hundreds of young men would consider a most extraordinary bit of good fortune."

"Go to Nice, Sir Robert," repeated Franz in the same serious tone.

"Yes, Herr von Strahl, I *will* go to Nice, but I should like to know what you have to say! Only speak out! You must surely be convinced that my great love for my daughter and my deep regard for you have induced me to say what I have just been saying. Now, I think, I can lay claim to your confidence."

"So you can, Sir Robert. I will not prove ungrateful. But I am going to tell you something which has never crossed my lips, and you must give me your word of honor that you will keep it a dead secret."

"Of course I will."

"And you will make no exceptions, not even for Lady Balmond or Miss Rosabel?"

"No, upon my honor."

"One single word will explain everything to you, Sir Robert. I want to be a priest."

Sir Robert jumped up from his chair.

"That's all I have to say," laughed Franz.

"That's all? So you want to be a priest and to give up your splendid talent?"

"I shall get more than I give."

"But if you want to be a priest, why in the world

do you go through art which is miles out of your way?"

"I don't think so."

"And what about Rosabel, Herr von Strahl?"

"It's too delicate a matter for me to handle, Sir Robert."

The baronet rose and laid his hand on the young man's shoulder: "I am heartily sorry, I am indeed, that nothing is to come of it. We go, then, to Nice, and God only knows whether we shall ever meet again. Whatever Rosabel feels, she will be pleased to know that you mean to be a priest."

"I have your word of honor, Sir Robert," exclaimed Franz. "You will not betray my secret to a soul. If any one mentions my name, you must say I care for nothing but my blocks of marble."

"I shall tell Lady Balmond so this very day, and I shall add 'we must go to Nice!'" She will take the hint, and everything will be squared. Only I shall be sorry not to see you any more."

"That will be a small price to pay," said Franz.

"And what will become of my beautiful Holy Child?" asked Sir Robert, looking wistfully at the plaster model.

"That will be executed in marble for Balmond Castle. I shall finish all the work I have undertaken. I dread parting from my blocks of marble."

"I shall never forget you," said Sir Robert as he took leave. "I am sorry that things have turned out as they have, you being what you are."

"I am not what you think, Sir Robert," said Franz gently.

Thus they parted. Sir Robert joined the little English colony at Sorrento, and Rosabel heard no more of Franz von Strahl except that he was in love with his blocks of marble. Rosabel's father and mother were full of Nice and the sick ambassadress, one of Lady Balmond's sisters, who had been ordered there. Lady Dashville made up her mind to a winter at Seville, as her son Lionel was quartered at Gibraltar.

"Roman days are over," wrote Rosabel in her journal.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

NICE has no Vesuvius nor blue Capri, but it is not without a beauty of its own. Oswald and Florestine occupied a house in the suburb called Croix de Marbre. Only a road separates its orange and rose gardens from the Mediterranean, and their sweet fragrance is wafted on the fresh sea breeze. They both enjoyed exploring the neighborhood, either on foot or on horseback. Oswald met old acquaintances, and through them made new ones, and they were soon in the full tide of society doings.

As they came home from a ball on Shrove Tuesday Florestine uttered an exclamation of relief.

"How glad I am the gayety is over," she said. "We've got *Memento homo* before us now; no more bouquets or decorations."

"Yes 'unto dust,' a pleasant reminder of our end—at least, the end of this wretched earthly existence in which we are all doing just what we wish not to do."

His words grated painfully on her heart.

"You are tired, dear Oswald. If you were yourself, you would not speak so."

"I mightn't say it, but I should think it."

"Have you been playing, Oswald?" she asked.

"No, I haven't. I have not had time, what with

concerts, theatricals, water and riding parties. That's all over for the present. Lent and dulness are staring me in the face."

"Let us go on somewhere else," said Flore eagerly. "Let us go to Rome or Spain or Sicily—to any place you fancy."

"No, it would be no good."

"Then let us go home, Oswald."

"It would be the same thing at Cronenstein or the capital. I should have nothing to take me out of myself."

This was Oswald's mind at the beginning of Lent. A few days afterwards, as they were breakfasting together, he said with a touch of constraint: "I tell you everything, Flore, so I must tell you that I have found a resource for myself."

"Have you? What is it?"

"Whist. I have discovered two capital players in two Russian generals, and we play every day. There's no better game than whist; it's positively intellectual."

"Only don't forget that you began with whist two years ago, Oswald. If only you would not play high, for that's as bad as games of chance. You may lose or gain a fortune in a single evening."

"Russians don't play low, and besides it's impossible to feel interest in a game when only forty or fifty francs are staked."

"Oh, Oswald, that can't be right. The player's interest in the game becomes gambling. If whist is really so good a game, why can't it be played for nothing, as chess is?"

"Simply because it's not customary," answered Oswald irritably ; "but don't be alarmed. I shall take more care of your money than I did of my own."

Florestine kept silence in the grief of her heart. It was soon known at Nice that Count Lauingen was playing and losing heavily. Florestine feared it, but dared not question him. He evaded her, and left her more and more to herself. She did not care to go out without Oswald ; she had no intimate friends, and was consequently quite alone.

"What senseless people there are in this world, to be sure," said Sir Robert Balmond one day to his wife. "Here's a German count ruining himself at cards, and for the third time too. Twice he's been saved by the hair of his head."

"Has he a family?" asked Lady Balmond sympathetically.

"He has a wife. She is living close to us here."

"O, are they our neighbors?" exclaimed Rosabel. "The wife is always alone now when I see her in the garden ; her husband used to be with her."

"Poor thing, what a terrible position for her!" said Lady Balmond.

She, too, was living a very quiet life. Her sister, Lady Vivian, was not well enough to go into society, and Rosabel did not care about it. Lady Balmond had always found parties her heaviest tax. Rosabel seemed to prefer her occupations to gayety, in fact, too much to please Lady Vivian.

"Rosabel is a very dear child," she said. "But

if she indulges in her liking for solitude, and has to live in high society when she marries, she will be unhappy."

"Don't be anxious about her. I hope Rosabel will marry for love, and not be too miserable over her married duties."

"Now that Lionel Dashville has become Earl of Glenarvon through his uncle's death, he would make a very suitable match for Rosabel, don't you think so?"

"Marriages are made in heaven, the proverb says," answered Lady Balmond laughing.

"True, but we mortals may be allowed to lay things before heaven, and this seems to me not a bad thing," said Lady Vivian.

Others, too, seemed inclined to bring it before the notice of Providence, for a telegram from Marseilles interrupted the sisters at their talk, and announced the coming arrival of Lady Dashville and all her family at Nice on their way from Gibraltar to London.

"I wish indeed that Glenarvon could find favor with Rosabel," Sir Robert remarked. "Nothing would make me happier."

Rosabel was as pleased as the rest, but she was thinking only of Blanche and Viola. Lady Dashville arrived the next day and the two parties soon made one.

"It's as lovely here as at Frascati," said Viola, when, after a ride, they had all gone with Sir Robert to Cimiez.

"Only Don Serafino is wanting," said Blanche.

"We have your brother Glenarvon, instead of

him," replied Rosabel. Yet friendly as she was to Blanche and Viola, she was cool to Lord Glenarvon. He rather liked it. He was neither a brilliant nor an interesting young man, but sensible and right-minded. He knew that a host of young ladies would be ready enough to become Countess of Glenarvon, so Rosabel's perfect indifference was a pleasing contrast, which predisposed him the more in her favor. His mother asked him one day how he liked Rosabel. He answered:

"The question is, mother, how does she like me?"

The young people would often be in the garden of an evening, when the moon was shining on the sea, and Blanche and Viola would sing Spanish songs, or play the guitar in the Spanish fashion, which they had learned at Seville. In the next garden, separated from theirs by a myrtle and laurel hedge, they could see a lady—the gambler's wife, they called her—wandering about alone for hours. In life joy and sorrow are side by side. Florestine had broken her painful news to Frau von Strahl, begging her aunt to let her uncle Frankenhausen be told, so that he might advise her what to do, or, if possible, come to Nice. Frau von Strahl's answer was a further grief. Frankenhausen was lying dangerously ill and scarcely expected to recover.

"There's no human help for me," sighed Florestine. For five weeks Lauingen had hardly left the card-table, and when he did appear at home she could get no satisfaction. Florestine had repeatedly asked him what was engrossing him.

"Combinations which may arise, and which are hugely interesting," he answered, and turned to other things.

Once he came in to her, beaming with delight.

"Flore, dear," he exclaimed, "this morning I won 6,000 francs."

"And how much had you lost up to this morning, Oswald?" she asked sorrowfully.

"Rather more, certainly, but in such a case one cannot afford to be discouraged, and I must play myself back to good luck."

"Now, do be contented with the luck you've had, and stop."

"My dear Flore, my luck's only just beginning to turn, and I must profit by it."

"O Oswald, not now, not during Holy Week. You have your Easter communion to think about."

"I should be very glad to think about it, but I went to the sacraments at Christmas."

"The Easter communion is binding, you know, dear Oswald."

"Of course. I have not the slightest intention of shirking it, only I must put it off till next week. It would be folly not to follow up my luck now."

"You are following your ruin, Oswald, and making us both utterly wretched."

He turned away from her pleading face, and said in a constrained tone: "I should be unjust to you if I were to do what you wish. I have lost very heavily, and now that I have taken a lucky turn, I must recoup myself. As soon as I have done that we will start, and I will give you my word of honor never to

gamble again. I have never done it yet, Flore, but I will then."

"Do it at once, Oswald," she pleaded. "Never mind if Cronenstein is gone. Only promise me to give it up; promise God the sacrifice for Holy Week."

"I will give you my word in a week, Flore."

"This putting off will be your ruin, Oswald."

"My darling Flore, calm yourself. You're shaken to pieces."

"How should I not be? You can put an end to my agony with one word, a single little word. Won't you say it?"

She stretched out her hands to him in entreaty. She shed no tears, but the sight of her wordless sorrow was more touching than violent weeping. Oswald was in the greatest agitation. He did not mean to give his word, still Florestine's grief tortured him, for she echoed the voice of conscience. She had fallen on her knees in her pleading. As he lifted her up hastily, he said: "Let us come to terms, my darling. I will not touch a card this week. Afterwards I must have just one more try, and then I will go to my Easter duties, and give up cards forever and ever."

So it was settled. Oswald spent the week in a very painful frame of mind between conscience and passion. Florestine suffered cruelly; she feared the coldness of distrust which would make her incapable of winning him back. Her Holy Week was passed in bitter desolation and anguish.

On Easter Monday the governor of Nice gave the visitors a magnificent farewell entertainment.

wald and Florestine went to it. He vanished immediately to seek out the card-tables, and sat down to whist.

"Who is that tall, pretty woman with the oleander sprig and diamond pins in her dark hair?" asked Lady Balmond of an English lady.

"A German countess," was the answer. "In society she is called the gambler's wife."

Sir Robert Balmond had persuaded his wife and daughter to go to this entertainment. Lady Dashville and Blanche wanted to enjoy a view of the elegant world at Nice, but they made the condition that Rosabel and her mother should share the pleasure with them. It was their first and last bit of gayety. Rosabel watched her mother as she pointed out the object of her inquiry. Florestine was standing quite near and just opposite to her, so that Rosabel had a good view of her face.

"Why, she is the original of the beautiful bust we so often admired at Herr von Strahl's in Rome," she said to her mother.

"You are right. At least there's a remarkable likeness," answered Lady Balmond.

"It was the bust of his cousin, whom he spoke of so eagerly and with so much admiration," said Rosabel. "He called her Countess Lauingen."

"That's it," exclaimed the English lady. "She is Countess Lauingen, but I had forgotten her name because she is known generally by that other title."

"So young and pretty and so unfortunate," said Rosabel, full of sympathy.

"And how strangely romantic it is that they

should be devoted to each other. He adores her and she is wrapt up in him, and yet he is making her most wretched and ruining her."

"Dear mamma," said Rosabel, "wouldn't you like to be introduced to Countess Lauingen? I am sure she would be delighted to hear that we knew Herr von Strahl."

"We shall be here only a fortnight longer, dear child. It's not worth making any new acquaintances," answered Lady Balmond, who did not care for Rosabel to be in any way reminded of Franz.

Florestine hid her sadness from the world with heroic self-command. Whilst she talked, joked, and danced, Oswald was never out of her mind. "Is he winning or losing?" she wondered to herself. "Is he playing very high? Can a fortune be lost at whist, and if so, what will happen? What will he do next?"

What *she* would do did not strike her.

"Is Count Lauingen quite invisible this evening?" said a Polish lady to Florestine. "If he avoids the ball-room, he ought to see the garden illuminated. Come, we will rescue him from the Russians."

She took Florestine's arm and led her through the suite of rooms to the card-players. They looked serious and absorbed, uttering no word except what the game required. Florestine need not have feared causing a disturbance. No one noticed her; neither would Oswald, unless the Polish lady had attracted his attention by saying: "We mean to put a stop to your game, Count. It's a shame to be shut up here when there's a fairy garden outside."

Oswald looked up with the absent, dazed expression of one who sees indeed, but who does not grasp what he sees, because his mind is completely fascinated and absorbed by some other matter. He bowed slightly to the Polish lady, cast a hasty glance at the second lady, recognized his wife, smiled with his lips, and then went on playing as if he were stone-deaf. The Pole thus repulsed was at a loss to know how to treat so cool a reception. But poor Florestine pressed her hand on her heart and remarked to one of the Russians,

"And don't you care to see the gardens either, general?"

"Oh, yes, Frau Gräfin. We shall have done in a quarter of an hour, and then we shall not fail to contemplate these wonderful gardens," answered the general in a very abrupt tone.

"I should suffocate physically and morally in this atmosphere," exclaimed the Polish lady. As she drew Florestine away she felt the poor wife's hand trembling on her arm. When they had got out she said to Florestine: "If *my* husband had been there, I should have knocked down the piles of money, and then dragged him off in the commotion."

"And what would you have gained by dragging away his person, if you could not drag away his will?" replied Florestine. "You would have humbled him before every one without curing him."

At last the party came to an end. The fairy garden was deserted, the candles were burning very low. Florestine could not make up her mind to leave without her husband, and he was still at the

whist-table. Happily the lady of the house lost patience. She went into the card-room and said courteously : "I wish you good-night, gentlemen, *and* good-morning, for it will soon be broad daylight."

Florestine was thankful when she found herself driving home with her husband. Lauingen was very much put out and said not a word. As he continued in the same state the following morning Florestine asked him lovingly whether anything disagreeable had happened.

"Why, of course," he answered gloomily. "I have lost enormously, and just as I was going to win we were sent off. It's unbearable."

"It was four o'clock, Oswald, dear, and you had been nearly six hours at the whist-table."

"What if I had been sixteen or sixty," he interrupted her harshly. "I *must* win back my money." He banged out of the room and the house. Florestine went to Mass. At the foot of the altar her breaking heart found a little rest.

"Take everything, take every hope of earthly happiness, only save his soul," this was her ardent prayer to God. She had settled to go to Cannes with the Polish lady to see a friend of theirs. Before she set out to fetch the Pole, she received a note from her husband, saying that he could not be back to dinner.

She went to Cannes, where she was induced to dine, and reached Nice pretty late in the evening. Great was her consternation to find a second note from her husband on the table. Both hand and heart trembled as she broke it open and read :

"DEAR FLORE :

"I have left to carry out my intention undisturbed; that is, to follow up my luck. Do not be the least anxious. In a week at the latest I shall be with you again, and then we will start for home. Do not be angry with me for this short absence, and believe me your fondly devoted,

"OSWALD."

She sank down, crushed, and stunned in all her faculties. She was only conscious of a heavy load which seemed to be gradually pressing her to the earth. Thus she lay for two hours. Was time going on or standing still? She did not know; she saw the servant bringing in the tea-tray as if through a mist. Then her maid came in, and that she should do so unsummoned was something quite out of the common. It made her ask eagerly, "What has happened? Has he come?"

"It is two hours past midnight," answered the maid with constraint.

"O, is it? Then I must go to bed," said Florestine in a dreary tone.

She allowed herself to be undressed, and lay down, but sleep did not come to her weary eyes. When she closed her eyelids, she roused herself with a start exclaiming: "Where are you, Oswald—oh! where are you?" Finally sleep came to her.

The next morning her energy had revived, and she rapidly made up her mind to telegraph to her uncle Frankenhausen. She said: "We are being ruined here. Come or send one of your sons."

"If only my uncle be not dying, he will come,"

she thought to herself, and it was her comfort during the long week in which every minute seemed to her leaden. She did not see any one ; she was not well, so people were told, and with good reason, and besides all the world was leaving Nice, her acquaintances amongst the rest.

Nice became empty. But Lady Vivian was to stay through May, whilst Lady Dashville had already gone, for in answer to some little thing Blanche had said about her brother Rosabel had replied that she did not wish to marry. Lady Dashville knew too well the small importance of a similar speech from a young girl. "The dreams of eighteen are like the morning mist," she said, laughing, to Lady Balmond. "They must be allowed to evaporate. Perhaps in a year, certainly in two years' time, Rosabel will think differently, so we will leave now, not to seem too persistent and—we will wait."

Lady Balmond pressed her friend's hand tenderly. She much desired Rosabel's marriage to so thoroughly good a man as Lord Glenarvon, and was glad that her answer had not pained him. They parted therefore very amicably to meet soon again in London. Only Sir Robert was vexed and began to be bored by Nice, from whence he made expeditions to Monaco, Cannes, and Hyères. On his return from Monaco he said to his daughter : "Now you may bemoan the fate of our neighbor, 'the gambler's wife,' in real earnest, Rosabel. He is sitting at the gambling-tables at Monaco, ruined, a picture of despair."

"And she is here, looking whiter and sadder every day," exclaimed Rosabel. "I wonder whether she

knows where he is. I'm sure she would go and fetch him if she did, wouldn't she, Papa?"

"How can I think anything about it, when I don't know her?"

"I feel as if I did, poor thing, with her striking, beautiful face. Of course she would like to know where her unfortunate husband is."

"Don't mix yourself up in things which don't concern you," said Sir Robert.

Rosabel was silent; but she secretly wrote a short note in German, and therefore somewhat awkwardly worded, and sent it to Florestine.

It was the sixth day since Oswald's departure that Florestine heard a familiar voice and a powerful step at the door. It opened, and in walked Frankhausen. She flew up to him.

"Here you are yourself, thank God!" she exclaimed, kissing him affectionately.

"My poor child, your news would have raised a dead man, and I was not quite that. But where is he?"

"Do you think I know?" she said, bursting into tears. "Perhaps in Paris, perhaps at Naples. Oh, if I only knew where he was, I should not be here. I should have gone after him at once, but I am absolutely in the dark."

A servant came in with Rosabel's note. It ran:

"You look so sad, gnädige Gräfin, quite different from your beautiful bust in Rome. It makes me so sorry! I see you every day walking in the garden and crying. Are you sad because you miss your

husband? I am able to tell you that my father saw him yesterday at Monaco. My father is Sir Robert Balmond and I, gnädige Gräfin, am yours very truly,
“ ROSABEL B.”

“ This is a real messenger from heaven!” exclaimed Florestine with uplifted hands.

“ Well, I shall go at once to Monaco,” said Frank-
enhausen. “ I will bring him back to you, and
then you must leave at once, my poor, darling
child.”

“ Yes, let us go, dear uncle, but where with him?
Where is he safe from himself?” exclaimed Flores-
tine in a tone so heart-rending that the old man
turned hastily away, for he could not keep back his
tears.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VILLA PAISIBLE.

IT was one of those warm October mornings which are so delightful on the Lake of Geneva. A man deep in thought was walking along the road running from Vevay to Montreux at the foot of the mountains. He came at last to a thick cluster of chestnut trees hiding a wicker-gate, on which was written: "La Villa Paisible." There he was overtaken by a girl with a large basket of grapes.

"Good-morning, Jeanneton," he answered, returning her greeting, for they seemed to know each other. "Yo 've a heavy basket to carry."

"No," she said, "it's not heavy, but it must be hard work getting through all the grapes, however sweet they may be, and I always feel sorry for her ladyship, who has to do it."

"But as a medicine the grape cure is easy enough, Jeanneton."

"Perhaps, sir; but medicine is medicine. Nobody likes it, and I'm heartily sorry that her ladyship has to take it."

"So am I, Jeanneton," said the man, as he passed on and the wicker-gate opened to admit the girl. The gravel-path led up to a small house in the Italian style, surrounded by evergreens. The autumn

stillness hung over the little domain, and made Jeanneton exclaim involuntarily: "How dead alive!" She set down her basket on the kitchen table, saying to the cook: "You seem to have got the right sort of people at the peaceful villa. They don't speak at all, do they?"

"I never served such masters," answered the cook.

"But it's not very lively here, Madelon, is it? You might really forget how to talk?" queried Jeanneton.

"Oh, there's no fear of that!" said Madelon, as she took the grapes out of the basket and put them on a glass dish between vine leaves. This was conveyed by a maid to the dining-room, where breakfast was laid for three.

The solitary tourist was Telesphor Herzog. He had finished, or rather given up, his studies. He had been obliged to leave Zürich in consequence of a duel, and now he was further hampered by a chest affection. He had gone to the Lake of Geneva, little dreaming to meet Florestine there. She had pitched her tent at the Villa Paisible, where they were living as economically as possible. Cronenstein was heavily mortgaged, and would have been lost had not Frankenhausen again rescued Oswald from destruction. He was found at the Monaco gambling-tables, and conveyed back to Nice by sheer force.

Oswald decided on Geneva as a residence, but at the end of a year it proved too expensive, and they found the Villa Paisible. Florestine's health had become affected at Geneva, and although she made

light of her cough, the grape cure was prescribed, and she was advised to stay on the sheltered side of the Lake. They took the Villa Paisible for three years, and with the prospect, at least for a time, of a fixed home, Oswald proposed inviting Frau von Strahl to join them. Amelia Verden, with a grown-up daughter, accompanied her aunt from Germany, stayed several weeks on the Lake of Geneva, and did her best to bring them a breath of the world. She was full of news, and told them amongst other things that Lisa Rink had not yet become Frau von Seeheim ; that, in fact, Prince Xaver was inclined to play her false, adding, "but he won't have energy enough."

"Of course not," said Lauingen. "He has no will whatever, and she has set her mind on having her way. She holds the winning cards, and one day or other she will be Frau von Seeheim as sure as fate."

"Lauingen amazes me, Aunt Augusta," Amelia would sometimes say to Frau von Strahl. "The contrast between his sayings and his doings takes my breath away. To hear him he might be wisdom itself. I feel as if he were a quiet maniac, who might burst out at any moment and kill us all."

"He's too poor now," answered Frau von Strahl, "and in one way I am thankful for his loss of fortune. He is obliged to submit to control, but it is grievous for Flore."

"What a blessing it is that Flore wishes so much for spiritual progress ! She cares for nothing else in the world."

"Still she is human, Amelia dear, and she *must* feel her present life of sacrifice. She will hardly allow it, yet as I am very human, I can't help seeing it."

"If you are human, what am I, Aunt Augusta? It would make me melancholy to think, and melancholy I don't intend to be."

Neither did she. She was always organizing parties, whether by steamer, boat or railway. One day they met Telesphor Herzog at the famous Castle of Chillon, and Florestine greeted him with special kindness. When she heard he was staying on at Vevay for his health, she begged him to come every day to the Villa Paisible. He accepted without intending to comply. However, when Amelia Verden left they were a very small party, and Lauingen was not sorry to have some one to fall back upon, though he did not particularly care for Telesphor. So it came about that Telesphor often found his way to the Villa Paisible. The late afternoon was Lauingen's hour for being at home. Rowing on the Lake and learning how to manage the sails amused him. Florestine called them his "nautical studies." She spent the whole day alone with Frau von Strahl, happy in Oswald's happiness. As for the grape cure, she submitted to it merely out of compliance for his sake.

"Florette," he said one day, "you must come out with me on the Lake; I am quite knowing about sails."

"I prefer oars to sails," she answered.

"You must trust yourself to me for once. We will wait for a favorable wind, and go over to St.

Gingolph. You will come too, Aunt Augusta, and you, Dr. Herzog?"

"Yes, on condition you take a good steersman and some one to support him."

"Are you so anxious as all that?" asked Oswald.

"I, for one, own that I have a great fear of sudden death," said Florestine.

"I long for it," exclaimed Telesphor. "A lingering death is what I dread."

"That's something different again. I meant only to say that I should like to be well prepared for my last hour."

"Why, gnädige Frau? Your life is a preparation."

"It is in a way; yet that, too, is a matter of great perfection."

"It's impossible for you to agree in your discussion," interrupted Frau von Strahl. "You differ on first principles, so there can be no common ground between you."

"Except under our roof," said Florestine, turning to him with a kind smile.

"Or in my boat," added Lauingen.

They discussed a sail across the Lake to the Meillerie rocks on the Savoy side, and Telesphor wanted to go with them. But the weather changed in the night and became very stormy, putting a sail out of the question. As soon as outdoor exercise failed Oswald, he grew moody and depressed.

"Flore, I'm almost done for," he said once, as he grasped her hand.

"O, no!" she answered, secretly dismayed. "Keep up your courage till All Souls' Day; then all

will be well. Do you remember coming to Cronenstein seven years ago at All Souls' time?"

He was touched. " You are right," he said. " God will help us."

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL SOULS' DAY.

TELESPHOR HERZOG had never made amends to his mother for the bitter disappointment he had caused her, nor had he even gratified her longing to see him, and now he heard of her death. All was over between them. It was with a very heavy heart that he sought out Florestine, and yet her words of heavenly hope and comfort fell upon deaf ears.

"Why do you speak this language to me?" he asked her coldly. "It is an unknown tongue."

"I can speak no other language to those I care for. It won't do to limit our caring to this world, which so soon passes away. No; friendship only begins here."

This roused the spirit of contradiction in Telesphor.

"I have asked a priest from Freiburg to come over for All Souls' Day," she went on. "He will say Mass for our dear dead, and your mother will of course be included."

"The Pfarrer at Vevay will say Mass for all the dead. What do you want with another?" asked Telesphor sharply.

"You can't have too many for the holy souls. Just think what the precious blood is to them, Telesphor."

"But do you really believe all that?"

"Most certainly I do, thank God."

"And what do *you* believe then?" asked Lauingen, addressing Telesphor.

"*I?*" he answered sadly, as much as to say there was no more question of his belief in anything.

"Yes, *you*," said Lauingen.

"I not only believe, but I know, that we shall fall into dust."

"Yes, the body will; but what of the soul, the spirit which thinks and acts and loves in us, and is the life of our body?"

"What you call spirit, Herr Graf, is merely life, namely, that which causes the bodily organs to work. When they are worn out, life ceases."

"That is revolting, and against both instinct and reason."

"So are many things that are true."

"No, not in the same way. We don't *like* pain or restraint, but reason shows us their use. They would have none if the soul were not immortal."

"These are all prejudices of Christianity, Herr Graf."

"But you are destroying life itself."

"No, I am not. Each man has his own particular physical organization, and should live accordingly."

"And do you believe that?" asked Florestine.

"It seems to me the most probable thing. I can't answer with your geometrical precision, as I can't claim it for my view."

"Two years ago at Zürich you were full of renov-

ating the world. How have you realized your programme?"

" Well, not at all ; but then I have gained experience. I have found too much humbug in party spirit to adopt it."

" Thank God ! " exclaimed Florestine.

" Why ? Because I have no sympathy left for anything ? " he asked bitterly.

" No, but if you see shallowness, you may also see something better."

" I doubt it. My mind has no receptive power." He interrupted the conversation to ask Florestine whether she was continuing the grape cure with good results.

" When I keep quiet my chest keeps quiet too," she answered laughing. " I don't know whether I am to attribute it to the grapes or not. I have given them up now, because going out in the morning early is very difficult these misty mornings."

" Still you go to Mass at Vevay every day."

" Yes ; that's different."

" Why is it different ? You have to go through the mist."

" Going to Mass is part of my life," she said, with quiet earnestness.

Telesphor had quite given up going to church, and he did not make an exception on either All Saints' or All Souls' Day.

After much fog and storm, All Souls proved delightfully warm, and when breakfast was over, Oswald again proposed a little sail on the Lake. Florestine agreed willingly, and he hurried down to

the water to order the boat and apprise Telesphor of their intention. Florestine and Frau von Strahl followed slowly, and when they reached the shore everything was in readiness.

"Good-by, dear children," said Frau von Strahl all at once, instead of seating herself in the boat. "I could not trust myself on these broad deep waters in your nut-shell of a boat. I shall stay at home."

"O auntie! there's Chillon, and St. Gingolph up there. We are not going a voyage of discovery on these broad deep waters," laughed Florestine.

"With this mild, favorable wind we shall be at St. Gingolph in an hour, and if the wind falls, we shall row and be there in two," answered Oswald. "Do come with us, Aunt Augusta. If you don't want to follow the example of Rousseau and Lord Byron, do as St. Francis of Sales did. I have no doubt he was on the Lake."

"Well, I am not tempted to follow him in this respect," said Frau von Strahl in a tone which settled the question.

Florestine sat with Telesphor on the seat facing the steersman, whilst Oswald attended to the sails with the man they had brought. Frau von Strahl looked after them gliding over the slightly swelling waves, and then went back to the Villa Paisible. Oswald was more than usually cheerful, much to Florestine's delight. Her mental gaze looked beyond the Meillerie rocks to Cronenstein, and she saw a future which would make up for the past. Her eyes shone and her face was bright, as with the light of a new day.

Telesphor sat at her side, silent and gloomy: "How pretty she is!" he thought to himself, "and how she loves him—a husband who has brought so much misery upon her! What odd people women are! Why am I not blessed with the same kind of love? I should have valued it. Why am I out in the wilderness of despair?"

Florestine suddenly turned to him and said: "Don't you think it wonderfully beautiful in the *Divina Commedia* that it should be Beatrice who leads Dante to heaven? Love is stronger than mind."

His thoughts and Florestine's had crossed. He controlled his surprise and answered coldly:

"Yes, no one will deny that."

"Still I am glad that Dante brings out the fact as he does. What must Beatrice have been to him to make him see it in this light?"

"It may have been purely imaginary from first to last," answered Telesphor in the same distant tone.

"If I were a Dante the world would soon hear of another Beatrice who is by no means imaginary," said Oswald laughing.

"If I were a Dante I would bring out a thought which is more striking than his wanderings in hell and heaven," said Telesphor.

"What is it?" they asked.

"A single line: '*Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria.*'"

"Only too true if we bring our misery upon ourselves," said Oswald gravely.

"But there is comfort even for that misery," said

Florestine, wishing to keep off all harrowing thoughts.

Some strong gusts of wind swept across from the Meillerie rocks, and at the same time the steersman warned them that the wind was rising.

"Let us put back to shore," said Florestine. "We shall hardly be able to land on the Savoy side."

"What do you think?" asked Oswald of the man. "Shall we land or put back?"

"Reef the sails," shouted the steersman. They had scarcely done so when a blast of wind blew them into the water and the boat heaved on her side. Then another gust tore the sails from the cable. They fell heavily on Oswald's head. He reeled backwards, and overboard into the water. Without a moment's hesitation, Telesphor threw off his coat and plunged into the water to the rescue, but Oswald, stunned by the blow, uttered no cry and disappeared in the waves. How was he to be found? The wind was blowing up for a storm. The steersman dared not leave his post; the man threw out ropes into the water, and both men shouted at the top of their voices. Florestine sat there as if turned to stone, her eyes fixed on the spot where Oswald had sunk. When, at last, Telesphor was seen fighting his way alone back to the boat, she understood that Oswald would never return, and with a heart-rending cry of anguish, she fell into a dead faint.

Fishermen from St. Gingolph now came out to the rescue. Florestine and Telesphor were safely rowed ashore, whilst every endeavor was made to recover Oswald. All the population of St. Gingolph, con-

sisting chiefly of fishermen, were gathered together on the shore, and saw the death-like Florestine carried out of the boat.

"She's dead—her ladyship is dead," cried a young girl all at once out of the crowd, bursting into tears, and pressing forward to gaze upon the unconscious form.

"No, no, Jeanneton; the Countess is only in a faint," said Telesphor, looking himself so ghastly that his words did not inspire confidence.

"Oh, she *is* dead!" exclaimed Jeanneton, wringing her hands.

"No, indeed, she is not. The poor Count was drowned before our eyes. What we have to do now is to see that the Countess is comfortably and safely housed somewhere, Jeanneton."

"Oh, sir, comfortably! It's not possible, for there's only a poor little village inn here. She will be quite safe, as mother and I will stay with her. This is my home, sir, and I'm staying with my father and mother for the feasts. Indeed I shan't forget this All Souls' Day."

Florestine was conveyed to the village inn, and Telesphor's orders were carried out by Jeanneton and several other women. In half an hour's time, she heaved a deep sigh, and opened her eyes. She was delirious, noticing nothing, and not recognizing Telesphor. He telegraphed to Frau von Strahl, apprising her of the accident, and asking her to come. Jeanneton brought the Pfarrer of St. Gingolph to Florestine's bedside, but he failed to rouse her. Telesphor, intensely agitated, went backwards and for-

words between the inn and the Lake. Frau von Strahl arrived by the first available train, accompanied by Florestine's maid. As she saw Telesphor's haggard face, the inquiry trembled on her lips: "Tell me—is Florestine dead? If *she* is alive, I can bear anything."

"*She* is living," he replied significantly.

"O thank God!" exclaimed Frau von Strahl, "but what of him? You don't mean to say that . . . he—"

A man came up to Telesphor. "They've found the poor gentleman at last," he said; "dead, of course. There they are, bringing him."

"Who, who?" stammered Frau von Strahl.

"The Count," answered Telesphor. "Won't you come to the Countess?"

Florestine neither noticed nor answered her aunt's loving words, and Jeanneton, who was kneeling by the bed, whispered brokenly: "Ah, poor lady, her heart is with the dead."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAREWELL.

THREE months had passed over the Villa Paisible, and though they had brought to it Florestine's uncle Frankenhausen, his eldest son, and Amelia Verden, she knew nothing of their presence. She was beginning to recover from a severe nervous illness. It was early in February. Telesphor brought her some violets one morning, and their sweet fragrance seemed to call forth some secret memory. She shed tears for the first time. Frau von Strahl and Amelia rose hastily from their work, and hurried up to her with the question :

“ Do you know me, Flore ? ”

“ And me ? ”

“ I should think so,” she answered. “ I am most grateful to you for all your goodness, but still more grateful to him,” looking at Telesphor, “ for he risked his life for Oswald.”

“ Did you indeed ? ” queried Amelia feelingly.

“ I could not do less, Frau Gräfin,” he answered coldly.

This circumstance had not been known. It was the last thing Florestine remembered. By degrees her mind regained its tone, but the body did not keep pace with it. She coughed a great deal and had a difficulty in breathing.

Amelia, with her natural inquisitiveness, had discovered that Telesphor was very badly off; and she proposed that he should take her place at the Villa Paisible, which he did. As soon as Florestine noticed her surroundings, she was struck by the extraordinary change in Telesphor. His bitterness, spirit of contradiction and hardness had vanished. He was more what he had been in the Cronenstein days. Franz wrote that he was coming to Vevay in May to spend several months with his mother. Florestine shared her delight and expressed it so warmly that Telesphor felt a little cool.

"Don't over-excite yourself," he said. "I fear this visit for your shattered strength, Countess."

"Perhaps. I have not seen Franz for five years. We cannot escape our pleasures and pains, whether they are good for the body or not."

"But you will try to avoid the pains, won't you?"

"Yes, just for the present. Afterwards I shall say good-by to doctors and medicine," she said in her kindest manner, for as she spoke she saw the light fade from his eyes.

Telesphor was vexed by the prospect of having Franz in the house, fearing in reality that he would have less control over Florestine. She guessed his suffering and avoided talking about Franz with her aunt in Telesphor's presence. In the mean time she had long conversations with Otto von Frankenhausen, her heir-at-law. She said to him one day, "You will understand that Oswald's debts are my first care. After the settlement with the creditors Cronenstein

was mortgaged for five years. Who knows whether I shall be alive in five years, and before my death I should like to put things in order."

"But, Flore dear, why should you want to accommodate your creditors before the time? Large sums would have to be raised, you would have still further to retrench, and your possession of Cronenstein would be delayed for years."

"How would it be to sell Cronenstein?"

"No, Flore, I could not agree to that."

"Then listen. You will have Cronenstein at my death. Might I not sell it to you now, and so clear off all Oswald's debts in a year's time? You would give me the annuity I am now receiving and perhaps a further sum of 10,000 florins which I require."

"If I agree to your proposition, of course the annuity must be greatly increased, and I must consider myself only your steward as long as you live. But I must tell you frankly that I cannot possibly increase the annuity for the next few years, on account of pressing creditors."

"For the present, then, let things remain as they are; I shall be rich again in my old age."

"Then, Flore, I must do nothing without consulting my father."

"I am almost sorry for that," she said, "as I so particularly want 10,000 florins at once on my own account."

"My dear Flore, let me beg you to have nothing to do with Oswald's creditors."

"This is my own debt of honor, and has nothing to do with Oswald."

"Then of course you shall have the money."

"Oh, that is good of you, Otto."

And it was settled that the sum should be placed to her account at a Geneva bank.

Otto left without making up his mind about the sale of Cronenstein. But when he told his father how much Florestine wished it, and how very ill she looked, old Frankenhausen was quite in favor of it.

Telesphor could not help betraying his feelings. A volume of Petrarch's sonnets was used exclusively by Florestine and himself, as Frau von Strahl did not understand Italian. One day Florestine took it up by accident, and came upon the words : "*Conosco io un amore che molto brama ma poco spera e nulla chiede,*" which were slightly underlined in red pencil. She rubbed out the marks with nervous haste, feeling sure that he would know what she meant to convey. When Telesphor came into the drawing-room, she was sitting at her frame with Frau von Strahl. They were both working industriously, and saying that possibly Franz might arrive that day, as it was the beginning of May. Telesphor took no part in the conversation.

"That everlasting Franz," he thought to himself, as he sat down at the table. Then his hand was put out nervously for the sonnets, and he noticed Florestine's amendment. It was enough for him. Frau von Strahl, who happened to raise her eyes from her work at that moment, was struck by his pallor.

"I am not well," he exclaimed, and he left the room, and soon afterwards the house.

"Just look at him," said Frau von Strahl. "He is absolutely running out of the house, and yet he said he was not well."

"He is ill in mind, Aunt Augusta."

"Yes, he has been so for some time past. He managed better when you were ill. Your illness took his mind from his own troubles, and now they are upon him again."

"I think he ought to get back to his profession. How could we contrive it for him without letting him imagine that we are tired of him?"

"He would contrive it for himself if he were sensible, for what is he to live upon?" answered her aunt. "I heard lately from Dr. Hellmut that Telesphor has all but spent his portion. He must be living on his small capital. His family are most anxious about him, though they know that he is out of harm's way with us."

"I must have a talk with him, Aunt Augusta."

"Yes, Flore, and have it at once."

That evening Frau von Strahl went to the town for the May devotions, leaving Florestine alone in the drawing-room, very anxious for her interview with Telesphor. He came back in a state of great agitation. From the garden he could see into the drawing-room, where she sat in widow's mourning, solitary, calm, and contented. She was deeply engrossed in her book, and yet rose, as soon as she heard his step.

"Oh, here you are!" she exclaimed heartily. "Do come in. I have something to say to you." He obeyed as if reluctantly.

"I must tell you some good news. Dr. Croisy has been here, and he allows me to give up the cure. In July, therefore, I shall leave the Villa Paisible, and go to Gais in the Appenzell Canton, to get the mountain air and to drink whey. Then I may winter at Gries or Meran, where I can eat grapes as well as here, and I shall be more at home as a German and a Catholic. In a little more than a year's time I hope things will be getting into shape, and that I may be able to take up my abode permanently at Cronenstein. So much for myself. Now what about you?"

"What about me?" he repeated.

"Yes. Haven't you, too, a life to live? It interests me as much as my own."

He looked at her eagerly.

"It cannot be otherwise. My father was fond of you, and you risked your life for Oswald."

"And what else?" he asked coldly.

"I should like to be of real use to you, and so you must not be vexed with me for speaking to you as a friend. You must alter your mode of life, Telesphor. You must break with the past, and take up your life from the time when you left your father's house."

"What's the good of it all?"

"Doing your work in life, and so reaching happiness."

"Happiness!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Why talk to me about happiness! Abstract faith, hope, and charity will never make it for me."

"I am talking about your work in life, and pro-

posing that first of all you should get a firm footing in your profession. Now that we are parting——”

“Parting!” he exclaimed in a tone of consternation. “No, no, don’t send me away. Let me take you to Gais and see how the mountain air suits you.”

“I am very grateful to you, Telesphor. But now that Dr. Croisy has released me from the cure, I have no further need of a doctor. You have devoted yourself so entirely to me for the last six months that I cannot thank you sufficiently for all your sacrifices, and would not for the world have you continue them. You must stay with me for the present to see Franz, and go later on to Vienna and Paris; and then I hope you will allow your old Cronenstein friend to open an account for you—just to help you with your work?”

“Are you sending me away and—paying me?” exclaimed Telesphor with quivering lip. “Am I to make room for Franz?”

“On the contrary I ask you to stay *because* Franz is coming. As to pay, well I am trying to give you what you gave me,—a life for a life.”

“All that is beside the mark,” he said passionately. “You know what I want.”

“I offer you what I have got,” she said in the same kind tone.

“Thank you. I cannot accept it,” he answered irritably. “I wonder, indeed, that a woman of your mind can make me the offer, when she knows perfectly well how things stand with me. Farewell,” he said, getting up.

"No, I can't let you go as you are," exclaimed Florestine, getting up too. "Wait and see Franz."

"He can do me no good, and a stranger in your house is only in the way."

"I have not treated you as a stranger."

"Farewell," he repeated.

"O Telesphor!" she exclaimed sorrowfully. "Remember Cronenstein, my father, and Oswald, and don't throw away my old friendship so harshly."

"It's no use reminding me of the past. What has it to do with the present? Farewell once more."

"O, you cannot leave me so!" she entreated.

"Florestine!" he said softly, but the passion in his tone frightened her. She drew back, saying, "Go if you must. I won't stop you any more."

CHAPTER XIX.

“ NOVA ET VETERA.”

FRANZ had finished all his orders and was preparing to start for Vevay. Except the Angel of the Resurrection, there was not a single marble figure in his studio. Only the plaster models remained.

“ Good-morning, Herr von Strahl!” suddenly said a familiar voice.

“ Good heavens, Sir Robert!” exclaimed Franz, “ what brings you to Rome ?”

“ You may well ask. I should never have dreamt of it. I have had to leave London in the season and come here to have the Holy Father’s opinion.”

“ Do you want to become a Papal Zouave ?”

“ Now, Herr von Strahl, you know I am an old fellow. No, the matter concerns Rosabel.”

“ Miss Rosabel ? How is she ?” asked Franz, full of interest.

“ Wait a bit. Have you time to listen to my story ? My Rosabel is the fairest rose in all England, and as good as she is fair. She has only one fault, she’s obstinate, and she has set her obstinate will on going into a convent.”

“ These things will happen sometimes, Sir Robert,” laughed Franz.

“ But I don’t approve of their happening to me.

At first I thought it a pretext for not marrying Lord Glenarvon, and I told her there was no necessity for her to take refuge in a convent. To that she calmly replied: 'I don't want to take refuge in a convent, papa dear. I want to go of my own free will and give myself to God.' I need not tell you what I felt. I merely replied very quietly: 'That's nonsense, Rosabel.' In the midst of my misery I couldn't help thinking how wise you had been in keeping your own intention to yourself. I should have been sure to say now, 'Aha! she's becoming a nun because he's becoming a priest,' and it might have given me a feeling against you, Herr von Strahl."

"Her resolution comes from God, not from me, Sir Robert. But I am glad that you kept your word."

"The long and the short of it is that Rosabel has persisted in refusing all offers—lately she refused a duke's son—and she's only twenty now. I liked the young fellow so much that I talked to her seriously. It was all in vain. Then I proposed that she should come with me to Rome and have her vocation examined by the Holy Father, and that I would abide by his decision. She refused, but said I might lay the whole matter before the Holy Father, and that's why I'm here. It will be given for Rosabel, I suspect, because I must stick to the truth and say to the Holy Father: 'She is lovely, an angel, an only daughter, a rich heiress, worshipped by her father and mother, besieged by suitors, and she turns her back upon it all and wants to go into a convent.' Can he say anything but,

‘Well, let her go?’ Livia Granford has also gone into a convent, but her mother has still two daughters.’

“Where has Livia Granford gone?” asked Franz, with interest.

“To the Good Shepherd Convent at Hammersmith, and that’s where Rosabel wants to go, to serve God, as she says, in those poor fallen ones.”

“*Deo servire regnare est,*” answered Franz, deeply moved. “Livia Granford and Rosabel Balmond are chosen souls, Sir Robert.”

They parted a few days later, never to meet again.

When Franz reached the Villa Paisible, poor, restless Telesphor was no longer there. On the morning after their talk, Florestine rang as usual for her maid, and discovered that Dr. Herzog had left the house. Frau von Strahl was inclined to blame Florestine for letting him go.

“What harm did his affection do you?” she asked. “It made him happy. You might have won him back to God.”

“These are mere suppositions, Aunt Augusta. It did not make him happy, and if I had encouraged him I should probably have drawn him rather to myself than to God.”

Florestine showed more wisdom than her aunt. Franz went to Geneva to institute inquiries about Telesphor, and they found he had taken his passport to Turin.

“Could he mean to join Garibaldi?” exclaimed Frau von Strahl.

“He is hardly strong enough,” said Florestine.

"Mightn't he go for this very reason, out of sheer desperation?"

"O Aunt Augusta, how wretched you make me!" said poor Florestine.

"We mustn't jump so hastily at the very worst conclusions," said Franz.

Franz thought of going home to Germany, and of taking his Angel of the Resurrection to Cronenstein. Florestine pressed Frau von Strahl to accompany him, though she shivered at the bare suggestion of seeing Cronenstein herself. "It is overwhelming to think what I should find there now," she said; "only a vault, and it does not even belong to me at this moment. I shall recover myself and get used to it all—perhaps some day or other I shall live there quite happily."

In June they left Villa Paisible for the Vierwaldstätter Lake. From thence Franz accompanied his mother to Germany, and Florestine established herself at a *pension*. For the first time in her life she was quite alone amongst perfect strangers.

Telesphor was in Vienna, on the staff of a paper notorious for its hatred of the Catholic Church. He wrote his articles at night over the champagne bottle. They were in keeping with the paper, insolent and coarse, depreciating the Church, and everything and anything connected with it, and thoroughly enjoyed by the scum of journal-readers. He was well paid, so he could afford to keep himself in champagne. This was Telesphor's life in Vienna. His relations at X. completely lost sight of him. He had claimed his share at his mother's death, and broken off all cor-

respondence with Rabener. The sisters were discussing him one day, according to their habit.

"He is wandering about in the world without any religion," sighed Afra.

"With nothing to do and nothing to live for, he's bound to come to grief," said Apollonia.

"First of all, he'll starve," exclaimed Agatha. "He ran through what father left him during his student days, and his vagabond life will soon do for poor mother's few gulden."

"The Countess is able to provide for him," remarked Frances; "it's the least she can do after his devotedness to her."

"She is sure to do what is proper," said Apollonia, "but she cannot be called upon to provide for Teles for life."

"And she could not do it, poor thing, as she has to get on for many a year with a very small income," added Agatha.

"What cattle men are!" exclaimed Frances. "For twenty years all X. looked up to this Teles as a prodigy of cleverness and goodness. Then there's this Count Lauingen, a spendthrift, a gambler, who beggars his wife, and brings her to death's door, and is still considered a pattern. What must the others be who are *not* patterns and mirrors of virtue?"

"These are indeed two sad cases, but there are good men in the world for all that," said gentle Apollonia.

"For instance the Frau Majorin's son," supplemented Agatha. "They say he wants to be a priest."

"That interesting Herr von Strahl a priest? Well, that beats everything," said Frances. "Who would have guessed it from his dreamy, beautiful eyes! But that's what it is. The male sex is divided into two classes, monsters and blockheads."

The sisters were accustomed to her way and let her talk on, partly because they viewed her as incorrigible, partly because they were sorry for her. It was no secret at X. that Frances' married life was not happy. She grew more and more embittered.

"Is it really true that Rabener is going to escort the Mayoress to America?" asked one of the sisters.

"I am sure I hope not," answered Agatha. "Is not the scandal of Teles enough for us?"

"Poor Fränz!" sighed Afra.

"She has made her own bed and she must lie on it," said Agatha.

The Mayoress of X. did not seem inclined to let Agatha have her wish. At ten o'clock one summer's morning she rustled into her husband's shop, ordering him to her presence-chamber. As usual when dragged from his customers he was put out, and said shortly:

"What's up?"

"Nothing's up. I have something to ask you, that's all. Do you still refuse to go to New York about my brother's money?"

"I do, absolutely, Bärbele. Vincent Guldman is dead—so are his wife and little boy. Your sister is dead, and you are in possession. The law out there and at home will settle the business nicely. Why should I leave my office and business in the lurch,

and risk my life on the sea? No, Bärbele, I will *not* do it."

"Then I will. I don't mean to let the New York lawyers keep half the money in their clutches as they have kept it already for a year. I shall bring them to order."

"You have lost your senses, Bärbele! You can't speak a word of English."

"I mean to take Jenny with me."

"Take my *Hännchen*? Worse and worse."

"I am thinking that Jenny will make a good match out there."

"Stop, Bärbe—it's really too bad! Let the good match come to our Hännchen. As for sending my child over there as if she were a bale of goods wanting a purchaser, I positively will not do it, and I think your scheme absolutely ridiculous, for *you* are not the woman for business."

"Of course I should want the advice of a sharp business man, so I have invited the Medizinalrath to go with me, and he has agreed to my proposition."

"But *I* don't agree!" thundered the Mayor, with a vehemence his wife had never before heard. "If you go with him to America you may stay there. You shall never enter my house again. I won't have so great a scandal at X."

"I shall return as a millionaire," replied the Mayoress coldly, "buy Cronenstein Castle, which will soon be put up at auction, give balls and parties, and see the whole town of K. coming up the Castle hill on all-fours to get an invitation, and you at the top."

"Gracious, no! I shall not go on my knees to

you!" he exclaimed, bringing his fist down upon the table with a thump which made the window-frames shake.

"Behave yourself, do. The people in the shop will hear the ridiculous noise you are making. The long and the short of it is, either you go to America or I."

"I shall not go," he exclaimed angrily, "and I forbid you to go."

She laughed scornfully, and betook herself in silence to the house, whilst her husband shut himself into the shop and strove in vain to serve his customers with his usual placidity of temper.

But the Mayoress ruled in her own house, and was, in prospective, a very rich woman. Frances Rabener went one day to speak her mind to her former friend, and found the Mayoress in pleased contemplation of twelve moire-antique dresses, which were spread out on sofa, chairs, and table.

"O, Fränz dear!" she said in a condescending tone, "so here you are at last. Just look there—how do you like those dresses? They have just come from town, six for me, and six for Jenny, all in moire-antique. You know it's the proper thing for fine ladies to wear, and one must appear in America with a proper show."

"Is it part of the show that you should be escorted by my husband?" asked Frances sharply, making room for herself on the sofa by pushing the dresses aside.

"It would look very strange in America to see two ladies travelling alone," said the Mayoress, se-

cretly angered at the careless handling of the moire-antiques.

"That may be true of American women," said Frances, "but foreigners have no need to adopt their customs. I tell you frankly I think your plan is outrageous, disturbing married people and a whole household in order to get a protector for yourself on your journey."

"With my weak health could I find a more suitable person than the Medizinalrath?"

"If your health is really weak, don't venture on the journey."

"And leave my property to be squandered, you mean? No, I'm not so unnatural a mother. I mean to have my million's worth, first, for myself, and then for my seven children."

"Why don't you go over there with your husband, or let him go alone?"

"He alone? What a wretched figure he would cut at New York! And he and I couldn't go together. One can't leave one's home and seven children to their own devices. And besides I don't see why you should vent your discontent on me. I made the proposal to the Medizinalrath and offered him a handsome fee. Surely a thousand pounds are worth having, besides a free passage and his living in America."

"No, not in your society!" burst out Frances. "To my mind the whole thing is so low and underbred that your husband must be what he is to agree, and mine what *he* is to go."

"My husband is Mayor of X. and I won't hear a

word said against him," replied the Mayoress, drawing herself up. " You may have whatever opinion you please of your husband. I value him extremely, and have always done so. But if you came here to say disagreeable things to me, you force me to treat you as you deserve."

So saying, she left Frances to her own cogitations. A fortnight later the Mayoress, escorted by Dr. Rabener, set off with her eldest daughter for New York, via London and Paris.

CHAPTER XX.

“MAGNIFICAT.”

GRIES near Botzen has much the same winter climate as Meran. It is a tiny place, and accommodation is limited, so that the great mass of winter visitors go to Meran. This was just Florestine's reason for remaining at Gries, when in September she left Switzerland and went to the Austrian Tyrol. Some few of its houses have a lovely view of the rich valley surrounded by mountains, and the river Etsch winding its way to Lombardy. Florestine preferred a small abode in the place itself, close to the Benedictine church. She was alone this winter, as Frau von Strahl was spending it with a sick sister. Franz was able to pay her a visit before his winter lectures at Innsbruck began. He found her cheerful and uncomplaining, but he could not get rid of the thought that she was certainly declining. How wasted her hand was! Then she was very pale, breathed with difficulty, and could move about only slowly and languidly. Franz questioned the doctor, who had been attending her for a fortnight. He seemed to think it was a nervous illness affecting the whole system.

“A thorough break-up, you mean, though incipient?” asked Franz in alarm.

"Let us hope rather that the nervous exhaustion may yield to remedies."

It was enough for Franz.

"How do you really feel, Flore dear?" he asked her one day, as she seemed to him quite exhausted.

"I 'really feel' that I am in God's hands," she answered gently.

"You are evading my question."

"The truth is, Franz, I have never quite recovered the terrible shock of Oswald's death, and now I feel that I am losing my grasp on life. It is very gradual. I can do less and less every day. It may be a nervous delusion, so you see I can say with perfect truth that I am in God's hands."

"Do you pray for your recovery, Flore?"

"Oh, no."

"But you should. You must get well again to comfort us all. Now you are making us sad and anxious."

The winter was long, dreary, and severe. Florestine declined day by day. She did not keep her bed. She was up and went to Mass by sheer force of will. She could scarcely read or talk; her maid wrote her letters at her dictation; even needlework tried her too much. Her doctor, confessor, and some nursing Sisters were frequent visitors. There was a large hospital at Botzen, which they served. One day towards the end of Lent, Sister Celestine came to Florestine, asking her prayers for a dying man, who declined all religious help.

"Has no priest been to him yet, Sister?"

"He was brought in yesterday morning. An Italian gentleman came with him, but he was obliged

to go on to Rovendo. They were both from Vienna where the poor gentleman has already had several bad attacks, and has been altogether reckless about his health, so the other said. We all thought he was going, so I ran for the chaplain. But directly the priest began to talk, the sick man opened his eyes and declared that he did not require a priest. So we put him down as a Lutheran, but the Italian gentleman assured us that he was a Catholic and a German; that his name was Herzog, but that possibly at Vienna he might have grown careless about his religion. This is how things are at present, gnädige Grafin. The Italian gentleman has left, and the poor man is at death's door."

Sister Celestine hurried away, and Florestine, in a state of mind not easily described, sent for the Benedictine Father to whom she gave her whole confidence. She told him Telesphor's history from first to last. "Now," she said in closing, "the all-important hour has come. He is dying at the Botzen hospital, and has no notion that I am here. I beg you to go to him at once and give him the sacraments, which he has refused. We will trust in Our Lord to help you. All you have to do is to get Sister Celestine to take you to the sick man from Vienna. God speed you, Father."

"I will try most willingly," replied Father Burkhard, "but it's a work of grace in which God must do everything."

"Yes, I know, Father. God *must* do everything, and we must consent to be His instruments, now, before it's too late."

“Shall I mention your name in case I cannot make an impression in any other way?”

“Yes, if it’s necessary, but it might excite him. You might say *Beatrice*. He will at once understand.”

Father Burkhard went to the hospital, a fine building standing on a free and open situation outside the town of Botzen. He asked for that part of it which was served by Sister Celestine, and begged her to go with him to the dying man.

“It is high time,” she whispered, “for the doctor thinks he cannot last over the night.”

Father Burkhard quietly opened the door to which she pointed. The figure on the bed, buried in the shadows of death, looked lifeless, but when Telesphor opened his eyes, they revealed soul, and consciousness, and clearness of mind. Father Burkhard at once said: “I have been commissioned to come and see you. Beatrice has sent me.”

“You are welcome!” said Telesphor, in a low tone, but with a peaceful expression.

“You know why I have been sent?”

“Yes—to save my soul. I will make my confession.”

He did so with great self-possession and presence of mind, only interrupted at intervals by his weakness, and received absolution with indescribable joy, then the Holy Viaticum. He had the benefit of all the Church can do for her departing children, and then said: “Now, Father, thank her. . . . tell her I am happy, for I have made my peace with God.”

Father Burkhard returned to Florestine at Gries,

thanking God. It was evening, but she was still lying on the sofa as he had left her.

"The battle is won," he exclaimed.

"*Magnificat anima mea,*" she answered. "But how did you induce him to make up his mind, Father?"

"I did nothing. God did everything. As soon as I said 'Beatrice sends me,' his mind seemed to light up, as if with some scene or memory of the past."

"Yes," said Florestine, as her tears rained down, "our last talk was of Beatrice before that dreadful catastrophe, and before he jumped into the Lake to rescue my husband."

"These memories, under the action of grace, helped him to overcome himself," said the Father. "He was as unresisting as a child."

"How his mother must have been praying for him," exclaimed Florestine.

The Father was silent. He had his own thoughts on the subject.

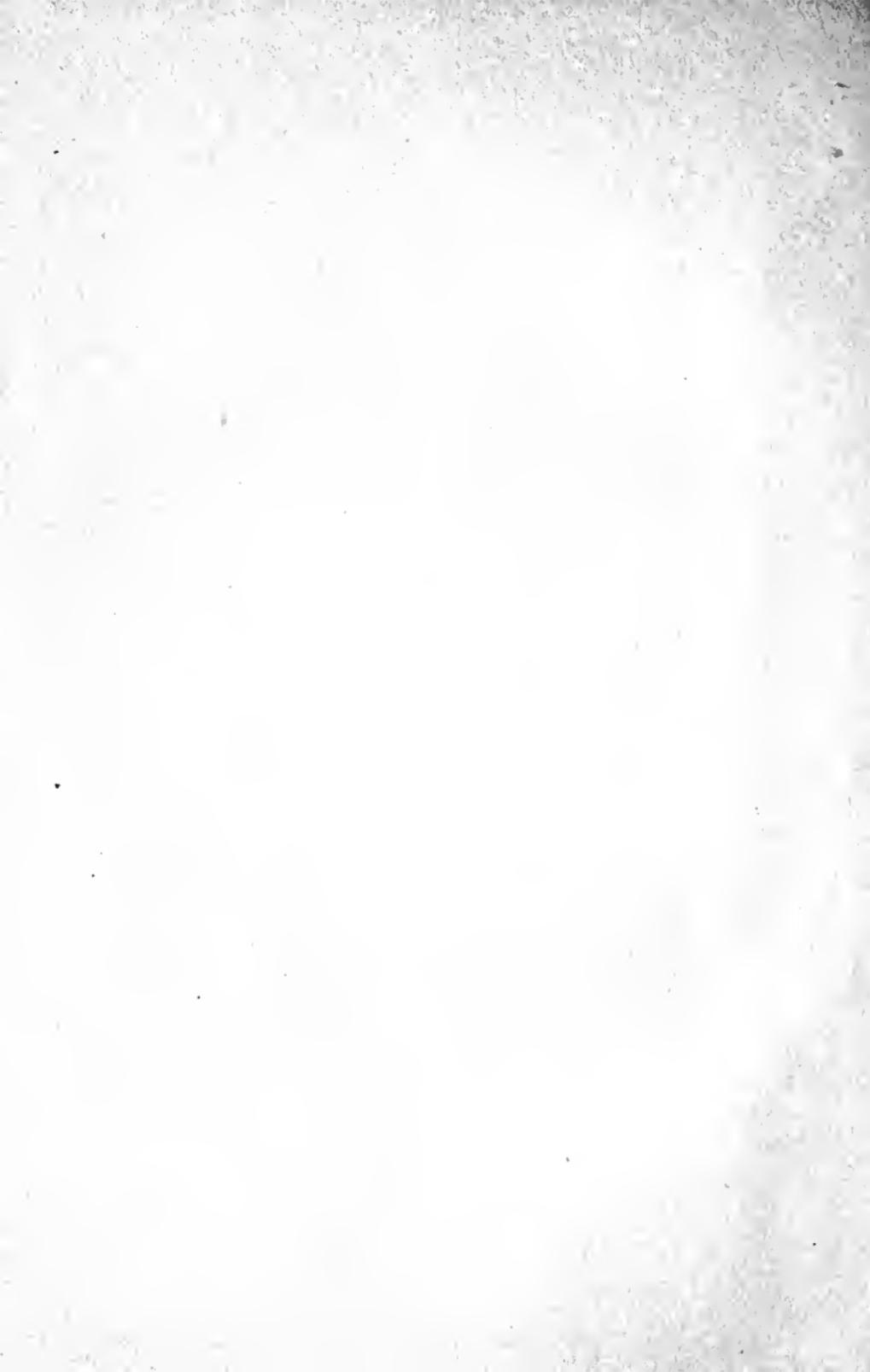
The following morning Father Burkhard found only Telesphor's corpse, and Sister Celestine told him with feeling that towards midnight Telesphor had expired quietly without any death-struggle.

"His life was his struggle, Sister Celestine," said the Father.

Florestine wrote to apprise Telesphor's eldest sister of his death. The prodigal, she said, was in his Father's house.

She lingered on for a few months. The life which had been so rich in joy and promise, in happiness and the world's good things, was drawing to a close in

shadow, oblivion and solitude. Florestine never saw her beloved Cronenstein again for she had not strength for the journey. She had told her relations to expect her, and thus they had been deceived as to her illness. Perhaps death came upon her unawares. So it was that, of all her family, only Franz was present at her peaceful death-bed. He was summoned from Innsbruck by telegram, when a sudden attack of fever made her condition serious. In three days all was over. Franz accompanied her body to its last resting-place. She wanted nothing more of Cronenstein than space for her coffin. From the winter of her life, so bleak in its bereavements, she went to the spring of eternity, for she had been able to save two souls, and her last word was *Magnificat*.





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